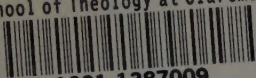
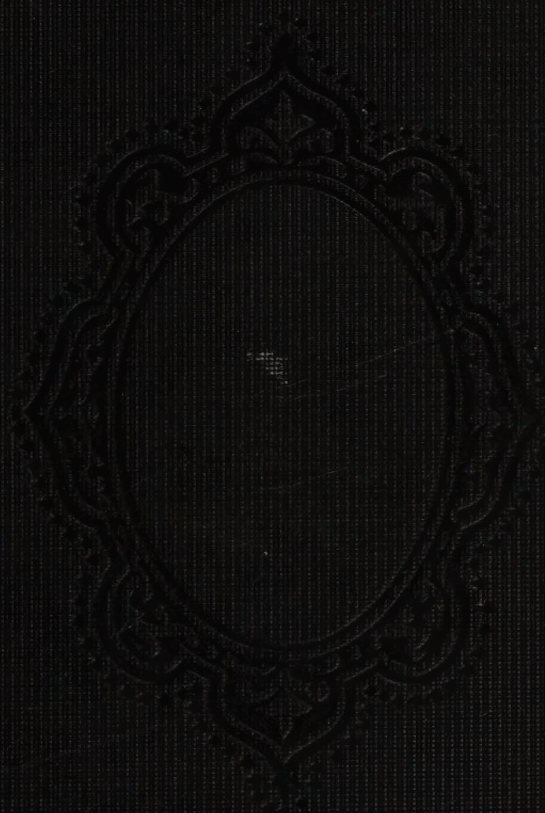
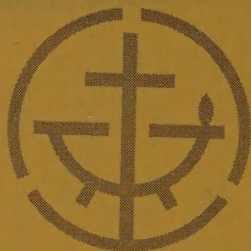


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THE GOSPEL

IN THE

BOOK OF NUMBERS

BY

REV. LEWIS R. DUNN, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

*The Mission of the Spirit, Holiness to the Lord, The Angels of God,
Sermons on the Higher Life, etc.*



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P R E F A C E.

THE question will at once be asked, Is there any Gospel in this book? In taking the affirmative of this question, we wish to say that we do not think that the Gospel is in this book as it is in that of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. It certainly is not here historically. It certainly is not a record of what Christ said or did. No such assumption is made; nor do we mean to say that the people reading this book, at the time of its first publication, or in the ages subsequently, up to the period of the coming of Christ, read the Gospel in it as clearly as we can. The truth shone upon their minds dimly and through many clouds. But who can say that the Gospel is not here? It undoubtedly is here in type and symbol, in rite and ceremony, in prophecy and in illustration. So it is referred to in gospel and in epistle by Christ and his apostles. Was not this, with the other parts of the five books of Moses, with the Psalms and prophets, the great text-book of the apostles and first preachers of the word? Did not Peter say to Cornelius and others, who had come together to hear him, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission

of sins?" But, certainly, the prophets nowhere give utterance to such a form of words, and their Jewish readers never understood them to say this. And so we say, the Gospel is in this book. Not, it is true further, in all its enumerations and historical records, but largely in many of them. So impressed have we been with this fact that we have been led to write these words. It may be, doubtless will be, that many will not fully agree with us in some of our supposed illustrations. It may be that with so much of the radiance of the Gospel shining on our path some of its light may be introduced from without, and not so clearly appear within. But in most of the types and illustrations adduced we shall hope to carry our readers along with us, while some, for the first time, may behold the heavenly light where they have not seen it before. But all will see it beautifully illustrated, if not typically portrayed, in the brazen serpent, in Balaam's prophecies, in the Nazarites, in the support of the ministry, in the lusting of the people for flesh, in the holy of holies, in the unblemished lamb of the offering, and in the mustering and marshaling of the hosts, in the careful guardianship of religious institutions, in the benedictions of the old covenant, in the light of the golden candlesticks, in the passover, in the silver trumpets, in the laver of regeneration, in the cities of refuge, and in the entrance into Canaan. In all these particulars the antitype, or substance, or reality will be found in the Gospel.

Many, however, have a limited idea of the Gos-

pel—what it is and what it records. The general idea of the Gospel is, that it is “good news,” “glad tidings.” And so it is. But it is more than this. It proclaims an historical Christ, his teachings, and his miracles. It proclaims his birth, life, sufferings, and death, resurrection and ascension. It shows our duty to our fellow-men in the various relations of life. It shows us the relations which he sustained to the Old Testament Scriptures, and how closely they are linked in with the New. It proclaims man’s character, destiny, and immortality; and it tells of the eternal blessedness of the good, the pure, and the holy, and the eternal sorrow of the finally impenitent. So the gospel is not only nor merely redemptional nor historical, but it covers all man’s conditions, environments, and hopes. Thus, while in this book there is clearly illustrated the wondrous plan of salvation by faith, there are also illustrated and typified not only man’s depravity, in the leprosy, and man’s lust for improper things, the gospel call, and the gospel hope, but, further, the zigzag course of the Christian toward heaven, his victory over his enemies, his vows, the true position of woman, man’s murmurings, and his sins of ignorance and presumption. All these things are parts of the Gospel, but amplified and illuminated by its teachings. It will be seen, therefore, that we have not undertaken a hopeless task or a wholly imaginary one. And while we shall observe its blessed truths gleaming faintly on our sight, we shall not fail to notice how truly they are interpreted by the Gos-

pel, and how fully they foreshadowed it. Take the Book of Numbers out of the Bible and how we should fail to understand many things! How could we comprehend the beautiful illustration which Christ presented to Nicodemus, and the many other things to which we have referred?

We therefore earnestly solicit our readers to follow us carefully through these pages, and to see how precious and sparkling are the diamond truths which shed their deathless luster on our souls. And yet again, while many have well-nigh totally omitted the reading of this book, or given it only a cursory glance as they have gone through with the reading of the Bible in course, we trust that after reading this book again, in the light of the Gospel, it will become to them one of the most precious portions of the law. Thanking the Christian public for the courtesy which they have extended to the author in reading the former books prepared and published by him, and for their testimony as to the good which they have derived from reading them, we send forth this work, with humble confidence that it will be blest to many who will read it.

L. R. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

I. NAME.

TWO names have been given to this wonderful Book. First, by the Hebrews it is called Bemidbar, which simply means, "In the desert." The Greek version called it *Αριθμοὶ*, and the Latin Vulgate, following this, Numeri, in view of its numbering the children of Israel immediately after the exodus and before they entered into the land of promise.

II. ITS CHRONOLOGY AND ANTIQUITY.

There is no difficulty whatever in understanding its chronology. It begins, with the command to Moses to number the people, "on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt." It closes with an account of the death of Aaron and Moses. The death of Aaron occurred (chap. xxxiii, 38) "in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month." This was exactly thirty-eight years and three months. Some few events occurred thereafter within a few months, so that no more than thirty-nine years are covered by the period embraced in this book.

As to its antiquity, this can also be readily shown. Scarcely any other book of the law is more abundantly confirmed in its antiquity than this. The Book of Joshua presents a fullness of evidence on this line. It would be useless to quote these references in an introductory notice of this book. We shall merely give the places where they are found, leaving it with the reader to verify the reference: Josh. i, 7; ii, 10; v, 6; xvii, 4; xxii, 17. Also, in 1 Sam. xv, 6, 29; xxx, 7, 8; Psal. lxxviii, 16; cvi, 28; Jer. xlviii, 45; Amos ii, 9; Obad., verses 4, 19.

In the New Testament the following passages are adduced as a confirmation of its antiquity and authority: John iii, 14-16; Acts xxi, 24; 1 Cor. ix, 13; x, 6; Heb. ix, 3; 1 Pet. i, 19; 2 Pet. ii, 15, 16.

III. WHO WAS ITS AUTHOR.

The whole Christian Church, with that of the Hebrews, is agreed as to the Mosaic authorship of this book. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, if the book is to be received at all as a part of the sacred canon. For we read in the thirty-third chapter the following words: "And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys, by the commandment of the Lord." Now, if he did not write this book then it is vain and worthless; no one should receive it or regard it as divine. In the Book of Joshua the assignment of this book is especially made to Moses. Josh. xiii, 14-33; xiv, 3, 4; xxi, 2. Now compare these with Num. xxxv,

I-4: xviii, 20-24; xxvi, 55; xxxii, 33; xxxiii, 54; xxxiv, 13, and you will readily perceive how the authorship is thus early ascribed to him.

IV. OBJECTIONS TO THE AUTHORSHIP OF MOSES.

The first is made on the ground of the first census. It will be observed that in Exod. xxxviii, 26 there is the account of a census having been taken. Also in Num. i, 46 the same account occurs, and the same numbers are given. The point of difficulty is that from six to seven months had elapsed, during which quite a large number had reached their twentieth year and, on the other side, a number must have died. Now, it can scarcely be regarded as probable that these numbers exactly answered the one to the other; hence there is an alleged discrepancy. The difficulty has been met by saying that the census in Exodus and the census in Numbers are precisely the same, and this for the following reasons: (1.) The time occupied was so brief compared with that of the census which David ordered. (2.) There could have been no real reason for a second census in so short a time. (3.) The tribe of Levi was not, evidently, included in either census. (4.) Only two numberings of the people are recorded—the first on the plains of Sinai, and the second on the steppes of Moab. Another reason, given by Ellicott and others, is that the enumeration in Exodus was made for the purpose of securing the atonement money, which was required for the service of the tabernacle and employed in its erection. No recognition was made in

this census of the numbers in the individual tribes, so that the census recorded in the first chapter of Numbers was made for military purposes only, or mainly, and therefore embraced more definitely the tribes, with their respective numbers.

Another objection is made on the ground of the number of the first-born.

The entire number of males is estimated at about nine hundred thousand, or one million; a proportion this of one to forty, or forty-four—allowing the figures to remain at 22,273—for the first-born. Two solutions of this difficulty have been presented: (1.) That the command contained in *Exod. xviii, 2* respecting the sanctification of the first-born was prospective, and that the census of the first-born comprised only those who were born between the date of the exodus and the beginning of the first month of the year which followed it. (2.) That the census included only the first-born among those who were under twenty years of age at the time at which the general census was taken. The first, and most probable, of these solutions, is based upon the reckoning of the first-born of the cattle. This certainly must have been prospective. It is evident that the male Levites of all ages bore nearly the same proportion as the first-born of the sons of the Israelites to the entire number of the other tribes.

“The Levites 22,000, and the first-born 22,273, are nearly equal to one-fortieth of the probable total of males in the twelve tribes, for one-fortieth of 900,000 is 23,500. This, at first sight, requires in

every family, or for each mother, the enormous and incredible amount of forty sons and forty daughters. But the true comparison is with non-adult males under twenty years; and this reduces the number to thirteen and one third of each sex. Again, it is the first-born males, and not eldest sons who had an elder sister, which alone are numbered; and this reduces the number to one half, or six and two thirds of either sex. But the mean number of children who survive at all the ages from 0 to 20, compared with all the births, are two thirds. Hence the probably surviving first-born would be two thirds for the whole period, and the number of sons and daughters in each family is reduced to four and four ninths, only with the condition that those who died in infancy are not reckoned." *

V. HOW COULD THIS MULTITUDE LIVE IN THE WILDERNESS?

"There were nearly two millions of people, and the place of their sojourn for nearly forty years was the Sinaitic Peninsula." It may be said to those making the objection: You do not know what was the condition of this peninsula at that period. Again, they were not in this place *forty* years; but only about fourteen or fifteen months. Then again it must not be forgotten that they were *miraculously* supplied with food and water. True, the opponents of this book do not believe in miracles. But none of these books could or would stand with the mirac-

* Professor Birks, *The Exodus of Israel*, p. 75, second ed., 1863.

ulous element divorced from them. They stand or fall in, or separate from, this element. It is impossible to deny the existence of this element. Did not the manna fall for forty years upon their encampment? Did not the water gush forth from the flinty bosom of the rock? Were not quail furnished in abundance for them by the same Almighty agency? Who can doubt the especial forthputting hand of the Lord for their maintenance and support? All along the ages prophets and psalmists, Christ and his apostles, tell of the mighty wonders wrought for them by Jehovah's arm.

Then again, there were *mines* in that peninsula which were at one time worked by a considerable number of people, which made it necessary for a large amount of food to be furnished for their sustenance. Furthermore, there were tribes of people on every hand, from whom supplies of food could be obtained for money, or gold and silver. And of this they had a very considerable sum. There were, also, many places where pasturage could be found for flocks. Dean Stanley says, "that the plain at the foot of Mount Sinai," which Dr. Colenso represents as one of the most desolate parts of the whole peninsula, "is one of the chief centers of vegetation in the whole district." With these environments, and with the providence of almighty God, there is no difficulty in crediting the fact of their support for forty long years while traversing even "that great and terrible wilderness."

VI. SEVERAL MINOR OBJECTIONS.

We can only give a bare reference to these. They are unworthy of a more specific notice. For instance, that which relates to the tithes, the punishment of death inflicted upon the Sabbath-breaker, the references made to both sides of the Jordan as "beyond," or "on the other side;" the use of the word prophet in this book, whereas in Sam. ix, 6, it is said "the prophet was formerly called a seer:" the one which is made to Num. xii, 3, that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," and to the insufficiency of time which is allotted to the transactions of the fortieth year. Whoever wishes to see these fully answered can do so by consulting Lange, Ellicott, Professors Birks and McCaul, Hengstenberg, *The Speaker's Commentary*, Kitto, Henry, Dr. A. Clarke, Lightfoot, Bishop Patrick's *Commentary on Numbers*, Bishop Horsley's *Notes on Numbers*, Skeffington, J. D. Lowe, Bleek's *Introduction to Old Testament Biblical Museum*, etc., and other writers upon this book.

There is really no book of the Old Testament upon which we can rely with greater confidence than on this. It stands forth as a great monumental pile before the eyes of the nations, written all over with the story of God's wonderful care over his people, of his justice in the punishment of their sins, and of his mercy in bringing them at last to the goodly land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob. And we shall see, as we read these pages, how the Gospel is illustrated and its truths confirmed in this book. How in the pillar of cloud and of fire, in the abundant supply of manna and water, the report of the spies, in Caleb and Joshua, in the "fiery serpents," and the "brazen serpent," the non-admission of Moses into the land of promise, and the appointment of Joshua—saviour, deliverer—to bring in the people, and the cities of refuge, three on this side Jordan and three on that, there are found most beautiful illustrations of the divine economy and types and foreshadowings of its glorious truths which we trust will make us ever hereafter to more fully appreciate this remarkable book.

ISRAEL'S HOST MUSTERED.

Chapter i, Verses 1-47.—Israel has left Egypt forever; a mighty host with all its families and all their movable goods. With them, also, is a “mixed multitude” of hangers-on; Egyptians and other nationalities allured by hopes of gain and impelled by the excitement of the proposed journey. It was, in a sense, a tumultuous host, without order or discipline. At the writing of this book two years have passed, and the time has now come for them to be mustered in as the Lord's host. This work is to be done thoroughly. No one above twenty years old and upward is to be excluded, and no one under this age is to be enrolled. Those who are now mustered are to be held ever ready for war. They are to be an army of the Lord, to do the Lord's will, and to obey his command. In this is beautifully illustrated the teachings of the New Testament, in which all the disciples of Christ are declared to be soldiers in the Lord's army, fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold upon eternal life. As such they are to put on the whole armor of God, and to stand firm in the day of battle.

1. The order for this enumeration is divine. God gave the order, and he appointed the men who

should fulfill it. It may be asked, Why does the Lord now sanction the doing of this work, and in the subsequent ages curse David for doing, substantially, the same thing? The answer is two-fold: First, it was not the Lord, but Satan, who tempted David to number Israel; and, secondly, it was done for the gratification of David's personal pride and ambition. Further, it may be said, this was done against the protest of the general-in-chief of his armies. See 1 Chron. xxi, 3, 4.

When God commands it is always safe to obey; but when Satan incites us we are to beware. There are several reasons why God commanded this muster-roll to be made now. (1.) The promise had been made to Abraham of an exceeding great multiplication of his seed. Even as "the dust of the earth," or as "the stars of heaven." It was now designed that they should see how this promise had been fulfilled, even amid the heartless bondage of Egypt. And not only that they should see it, but also the on-coming ages should know the unchangeableness of his word. (2.) This he demanded should be done carefully and certainly. There is nothing easier than to miscalculate numbers, especially where the basis of reckoning is loose and careless. This has been illustrated in thousands of instances. Here he orders this to be done by an individual count. They had been numbered before. See Exod. xxxviii, 25-26. But they were not then numbered by their families, and only for the purpose of securing the roll-money for the service of

the tabernacle. Now the enrollment was to be as definite and exact as it could be made; and every man was to know his family, his tribe, and that the government knew him. (3.) It was only those who were able to go forth to war who were numbered. The blind, the lame, the diseased, and the aged were not enrolled. They were unincluded in this great muster. It is the Lord's plan in all the ages, never to ask a man to do what he is incompetent to perform. On the other hand, he expects every one to do all he is able to do.

The men selected for this enrollment were "renowned men." Heads of their families and their tribes—princes in Israel. Sometimes the great, the wealthy, and the wise attempt to excuse themselves from the service of God. They are too much busied with their own concerns. But when God calls, even the very princes of his people are to obey. Then he who is greatest among them is to be servant of all. And when they engage in his service they are not to be envied because of the high and honorable position which they are called to occupy, but they are to be honored as the servants of the Lord. It is, alas! too seldom that he "who wears a coronet," who is high and exalted among the nations, "prays." But there are those who wear crowns and coronets who do pray and labor in Christ's cause. They are worthy standard-bearers in the army of the Lord. Like Queen Victoria and Lord Shaftesbury, like Coligny and Condé, like the electors of Germany in the time of

the Reformation, they stand forth doing the Lord's will, and accomplishing his purposes.

We see here, further, with what quickness, readiness, and promptness this work was done. It would seem as if only a few days were consumed in doing a work so vast. It took Joab and his assistants ten months to do this work in David's time. But then they were widely dispersed abroad, while now they are near together. Then it was by the inspiration of Satan, now by the express order of God. Then this work had been done only a few months before, and what alterations were necessary had probably been made at that time. So the work now was comparatively easy. Thus when God calls us to do his work there is to be no delay. "The King's business requires haste." No one has a right to be an indifferent or idle worker. God demands that his orders be quickly obeyed.

Another thought here: *only Israelites were to be mustered*. No one of the mixed multitude is to be put upon the rolls. Their part was principally done in murmuring, and exciting others to distrust and unbelief. They could not be intrusted on the army-rolls. They were more ready for a ferment than for a fight. No wonder that the immortal Washington, on an occasion of great importance and peril, said, "Put no one but Americans on guard to-night." So God would not allow any one but his own people to fight his battles, or to do his work. In the numeric record Judah is found to have the largest number of men. "This deserves

notice in connection with the blessing pronounced on that tribe in Gen. xlix, 8-12, 'Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.' " * And so it always was. Judah was the grand leader of all the princes and tribes of Israel. God designed that he should be so, as his was the tribe from which Immanuel was to come. He was "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Other tribes were large, Judah was the largest. Others were great, but he was the greatest. His banner was always floating eastward, and at the head of the columns of those who fought in the army of the Lord. So the first rays of the morning sun gleamed upon his standard; and the last beams of his setting gilded it with his radiance. Judah was the glory and the praise of his brethren, and his tribe held the scepter until Shiloh came.

Ephraim and Manasseh, children of Joseph, were nearly as numerous as Judah. But it will be seen "that the number of the tribe of Ephraim exceeded that of the tribe of Manasseh." Ver. 35. (See Gen. xlviii, 19, 20.) The whole number was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. With three exceptions, Russia, Germany, and France, this is larger than the regular army of any nation now on the face of the globe. Of course, the war-footing of many other nations is greater than this; but this is an amazing regular army for that day and age. But, vast as it was, it was all swallowed up in thirty-eight years from this time, because of unbelief and sin. Only two of this great number

* Ellicott.

escaped the general destruction ; namely, Caleb and Joshua. So multitudes who profess to be soldiers in the Lord's army are wasted by death or become inefficient and useless. One of the great defects in all our Churches is *want of organization*. Herein were the beauty and the strength of this mustering. There were twelve divisions, and these were subdivided into families and persons. No one was unreckoned ; no one was overlooked. The whole number of the people, including men, women, and children, was probably from two to three millions.

Verses 47-54.—The Levites, however, were exempted from this enrollment. In all ages the priestly caste of men has been generally free from war-service ; so the Levites, by the appointment of God, were free. To them were committed the spiritual interests of the tribes, the worship and service of God, the offering of sacrifices, and the expounding of the law. "They warred the warfare of the tabernacle." When the tabernacle was to be taken down, they were to do it ; when it was set up, their hands performed the work. No one else was allowed to do these things. In this manner their sacredness was recognized, and they were kept separate from the temporalities of the tribes. They were consecrated to God and his service forever. Thus all Christian ministers are to be devoted to him. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life ; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." So we think no minister should be a soldier, a lawyer, a physician, a business

man, or a farmer. He cannot do these things without lowering the standard of his calling and materially injuring his efficiency. Here, then, we have the divine plan. All Israel mustered into the army; all Levites mustered into the service of the sanctuary. The one acting for protection and defense; the other for beauty and glory. The one cannot do without the other. Both are essential to a nation's prosperity, security, and peace. When every Christian is mustered into the Lord's army, and panoplied for the fight with the world and sin and hell, millennial glory will soon burst over all the earth.

THE LORD'S ARMY MARSHALED.

Chapter ii, Verse 1.—Israel had come out of Egypt in rank and file. Already some order had prevailed in their movements and encampments. Now, however, all was to be reduced to a uniform grade; all the hosts were to be marshaled. They still dwelt in tents, and in them they were to continue until they reached the land of Canaan. It is even so with the Lord's army. They are not at home here; they only "lodge awhile in tents below." But while thus sojourning here they are pressing forward through hosts of foes toward the land of endless rest.

But God is a God of order; and so he would have his ancient people move forward orderly. "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard (דָגל, flag, banner, standard)." All, it is true, were in one army; but each was to be by his own tribal standard. They would really be more united in this way. Is it not even so in the Christian Church? In it are various bodies of believers, represented by various names; but it is all only one army, one body. And yet each Christian is to stand by his own Church, and fight under his own standard. It is not at all necessary, or even desirable, for the present, that they should all act

in a mixed mass or in an organically united body ; but let them all be united, and live and work and fight in the army of the Lord.

Verse 2.—The ensign was for every family. This was a mark of distinction, that every one might know in an instant where he was, and whether or not he was in his right place. But the tabernacle was to be in the midst of them all, in the very heart of the camp. Thus it should always be : God in the midst of us. This is always the assurance of victory. And yet they were not to press upon it, or to come too near unto it, lest they should fail to give it that reverence which it demanded of them. There must be two thousand cubits distance, at least, from the holy of holies ; that was near enough for defense, and it was far enough away for reverence. This was the nearest point which the forefront of their armies should take ; while the hindmost part must have been several miles away—some think as far as twelve miles. As this camp was marshaled, it must have presented a beautiful appearance as well as one of great strength. No wonder that Balaam, when he first beheld this encampment, cried out, “ How beautiful are thy tents, O Israel.” And this now is the real glory of the Church of Christ. This, also, is its real strength. When John Wesley was dying he exclaimed, in the fullness of his joy, “ The best of all—God is with us.” As “ the sanctuary of God was in the midst of the camp of the Israelites, and set forward in the midst of their hosts as they marched,” so God is represented by the psalmist as

being in the midst of his Church. "God is in the midst of her; God shall help her, and that right early." So it has been observed, also, that the collocation of the tribes was evidently determined in accordance with the mutual relationship. The eastern camp was composed exclusively of the sons of Leah; the southern, of her two remaining sons and a son of Zilpah, her hand-maid; the western, of those of one of the sons and two grandsons of Rachel; and the northern, of those of the sons of Bilhah and the remaining son of Zilpah.* So the natural ties should strengthen and confirm those of Christian communion.

Verses 3-32.—But what were these standards? They were probably such as they had seen in Egypt, but without their idolatrous emblems. "These standards were like an umbrella, or fan-like form, made of ostrich feathers, or shawls, lifted upon the points of long poles, which were borne, either like the sacred central one, on a car, or on men's shoulders; while others might have been like the beacon-lights which are set on poles by Eastern pilgrims at night."

Judah's standard had the emblem of a lion; Benjamin's that of a wolf; Dan that of a serpent; and Naphtali's that of a hind. Then, again, it has been thought that the four principal standards represented Judah as a lion; Reuben as a man; Joseph as an ox; and Dan as an eagle. It is so in our own national standards. The great central

* Ellicott.

banner which floats over all is that of the stars and the stripes; then each State has its own banner, and every company and regiment may bear its own ensign. It was in this way that whoever saw Judah's banner would know where he was, while the banner, or ensign of his tribe or family, would clearly indicate not only where he belonged but in what division he was to fight. Here is the real ideal of Christ's army. Over all floats his blood-stained banner; while each Church may have its own emblem. No one can go where he pleases. No one can fight where he lists. All are to move in the lines in which divine Providence has placed them. This is what the prophet Isaiah foretold. Christ is the ensign to which the Gentiles shall seek, around which the outcasts of Israel will gather, and the dispersed of Judah assemble.

When the camp set forward, Judah with his lion banner took the lead, and Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan were to follow him with their tribes. Probably Judah and Reuben first went forward, then the tabernacle with the Levites, and then came Ephraim and Dan. Dan's mighty, war-like host brought up the rear. But how important was this position! Stragglers were to be picked up, wily foes were to be watched, and lost property was to be recovered. God was not only in the midst, and the forefront, but he was also their rearward. Dan was in the army as much as Judah, and the shadowing wings of the Almighty were over him and his host as they were over Judah and his mighty army.

To us it is very interesting to notice the meaning of the names of some of these mighty leaders of Israel. Nathanael signifies "the gift of God;" Eliab, "my God a father;" Elizur, "my God a rock;" Shelumiel, "God, my peace;" Eliasaph, "God has added;" Elishama, "my God has heard;" Gamaliel, "God my reward;" Pagiel, "God has met me."

So God was remembered in their names as well as in his tabernacle. It is further matter of interest to consider how that God had not only appointed these men, but, also, had assigned their position in the army. If Moses had done this, jealousies and strife and heart-burnings might have ensued. But no blame on these accounts could now be laid on him.

No event occurs in life without the divine order or permission. We are all prone to think that men often gain their positions by fraud, or money, or human device. And, in a sense, this may be true; but God presides over all. He putteth down one and raiseth up another. "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase." It is always a delightful contemplation that *God rules*; and either orders all things according to the counsel of his will, or permits what occurs, to show forth his glory. If we humbly obey him he will order all our movements and direct all our ways. He will assign us our proper positions and guide us in the right way. And how wonderfully he often does this!

The following is probably the plan of the encampment of Israel:



Thus the army of the Lord was quickly and easily marshaled. At the sounding of the silver trumpets each division knew when and where to move; and all moved in harmony on their journey, or on the battle-field. In like manner the gospel Church is encamped in this world; a great host of Christian soldiers, a great company of Christian pilgrims; and, as it is not always for the soldier to expect pleasant days and comfortable times, so the Christian expects to have often sudden and hard marchings over dusty roads, or amid the deepening mud. Foes are to be met on every hand, to be struggled with and conquered. But the journey is brief, and the time of war short. Soon the journey will end and soon the battle will be fought. And then will

come the Canaan promised—our Father's house, with its many mansions—the crown and the palm of the victor. How delightful it will be for those who have journeyed together, fought together, and endured hardness together, to be rewarded and crowned together, and to dwell forever an unbroken, grand army of victors and conquerors in the presence of their Leader and their King!

PRIESTS AND LEVITES.

Chapter iii, Verses 1-40.—Here we have the organization and confirmation of the offices of the priests and Levites, and their regular appointment to their work. All nations have had a priestly order, and a sacrificial ritual. From the earliest antiquity to the present hour this is the history of all. The Egyptians, among whom Israel had sojourned so long, had their priesthood, their sacrifices, and temples. In this chapter Jehovah confirms the priesthood of Israel, and establishes it until the great High-priest himself should come. No nation can long exist without some type or form of religion. The human heart demands it; its necessities, wants, and woes cry out for it. The priesthood of every land has generally been no small part of that land. They have stood foremost among its rulers and chief men, and their counsel in peace and in war has been a powerful factor in all their interests. No man can estimate this force in the history of the past; no one can understand its power at the present. The duties of their office are multiplied and arduous. Then in nearly all lands—and this was especially true in the land of Judea—and now in the wilderness, they have most carefully guarded against interference and intrusion upon their rights and

privileges. God threw around this office his most solemn injunctions, and his almighty guardianship. No one was to approach the tabernacle for service but them ; and if the stranger came nigh he was to be put to death. In a subsequent period, even when King Uzziah came near to offer a sacrifice, he was smitten with leprosy and retired from the courts of the temple in disgrace. It is said that since this event in the history of Uzziah a sword was hung over the door of the temple, on which was engraved ; "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." These priests were consecrated, their hands were filled, to minister in its holy duties.

You will observe that "the name of Aaron was used first, not only because he was the elder brother, but also because the ministry of Moses was restricted to his own person, and his sons are merely classed among the rest of the Levitical families in 1 Chron. xxiii, 14 ; whereas the office of Aaron was perpetuated in the persons of his descendants. Hence we find no mention made in this place of the sons of Moses, but only those of Aaron." *

But the eldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, not mindful of the high and holy duties of their office, offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai. The record of this, in Lev. x, 1-7, is a sad comment on the result of their dereliction of duty and their failure to recognize the responsibility of their position. How many professedly Christian ministers of the present day and of

the past ages have acted in a similar way! They have offered strange fire in the pulpits and altars of the Church. In sermons, sacraments, and prayers their services have not only been unacceptable to the people, but perverse and rebellious in the sight of God, contrary to the spirit of Christ, opposed to his teachings, and deleterious in their effects. Such ministers are often arrested here upon earth, and have met a fearful doom; but they will have to pass a strict account at the bar of the Master for their unlawful and sinful practices in the performance of their sacred duties.

The ministry of the Christian religion, if it is any thing, is a *holy* office, and the men who fill it should be holy men. They are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is, indeed, a fearful thing for the ministry to be destitute of a high sense of their responsibility to God. It is said of these unfortunate and wicked men that "they had no children." This was fortunate for Israel. And yet, while they had no children, they have had *representatives* in every age, and, we fear, in every Church. But notwithstanding the strictness of the divine law, see how the sons of Eli acted in their office; and read how frequently the prophets charged Israel with acting contrary to the will and command of the law. Nadab and Abihu disobeyed their father and their father's God, and were cut off from the priesthood. Eleazar and Ithamar, on the other hand, ministered "in the sight of Aaron their father." Young minis-

ters are greatly blessed when they can begin their ministry in the sight of the aged pastors of the Church. Their wisdom and counsels, their teachings and example are of the highest importance to them. Many ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church owe, under God, all they are to the counsels, restrictions, advice, and example of the fathers in the Church. Perhaps no training of ministers ever equaled that of our early Methodist and Presbyterian brethren. The candidates were speedily, and sometimes sharply, corrected for whatever was wrong or unseemly in their preaching or their pastoral work; and lessons, never to be forgotten, were often given them. Of course, this method of personal oversight and instruction is not now available; and our theological seminaries are now called upon to do this work of preparation as best they can; but these institutions can never fully compensate for this training for the work of the ministry, by those who were well-skilled and of long experience, in the times gone by.

It is certainly matter of rejoicing that the ministry of the present day is so much better trained than that of a few centuries past. D'Aubigné tells us that in the fifteenth century "the superior clergy themselves were sunk in the grossest ignorance. A bishop of Dunfeldt congratulated himself that he had never studied Greek or Hebrew. The monks asserted that all heresies arose from these languages, but especially from the Greek. 'The New Testament,' said one of them, 'is a book full of serpents

and thorns.' 'Greek,' continued he, 'is a modern language, but recently invented, and against which we must be on our guard. As to Hebrew, my dear brethren, it is certain that whoever studies it immediately becomes a Jew.' Thomas Linacer, a reputedly learned and celebrated divine, had never read the New Testament. Drawing near his end (in 1524) he called for it, but quickly threw it from him with an oath, because his eye had caught the words, 'Because I say unto you, Swear not at all,' and said, 'Either this is not the Gospel or we are not Christians.' A certain doctor of the Sorbonne acknowledged that he had not read the New Testament until after he was fifty years old. Albert, Archbishop of Metz in 1530, accidentally met with a Bible, opened it, and having read some pages, said: 'Indeed, I do not know what this book is; but this I see, that every thing in it is against us.' Carblastatius, afterward one of the Reformers, said he had never read the Bible until eight years after he had taken his highest degree in divinity." These are startling facts, and no wonder that the night of ages was so dark. Christ's ministers need to understand his Gospel, that they may offer no strange fire upon the altars of his Church, and give no poisoned bread from its pulpits.

The whole tribe of Levi was given to assist the priests. When the destroying angel passed over the doomed land of Egypt all the first-born of that land were destroyed; but none of the first-born of Israel perished. Now the Lord required the conse-

cration of the first-born of Israel to himself, and in lieu of them accepts the tribe of Levi. The reason for this is as follows, ver. 13: "Because all the first-born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast: mine they shall be: I am the Lord." Our first-born, the brightest and best of our sons, should be cheerfully given up to God for the ministry or the missionary work, if the Lord calls them thereto. Nothing should be withheld from him. True, there is seemingly no money in this; they may be obliged to meet poverty, want, trial, and sorrow; but their reward will be glorious and eternal. Too often, alas! the best of our sons are withheld from the Lord, even when he may call them, and they are set apart for business purposes or professions; while it is thought the humbler and poorer will answer for the work of the Lord. So it has usually been that the ranks of the ministry have been filled from the poorer classes of men. God has chosen them, and crowned them with honor and glory.

To each of the divisions of the tribe especial work was given. McCheyne has aptly and beautifully illustrated this as follows:

"The *Kohathites* upon their shoulders bear
The holy vessels, covered with all care;
The *Gershonites* receive an easier charge,
Two wagons full of cords and curtains large;
Merari's sons four ponderous wagons load
With boards and pillars of the house of God."

So in the Church of Christ. All are not required to do the same work. Nor is any one required to do all things. There is a just division of labor. Some have a higher, more responsible, and more awful charge than others. But all have every thing to do which they are capable of performing. No one should be troubled because he has not higher and greater duties to perform. God knows best, in his great field, where to assign our labor, and to command our service. Gershon could not do the work of Kohath, nor Kohath the work of Merari. Each must do his own. Not only so. Every one has some burdens to bear. It is not given us to go burdenless through this world. Every one has his own burden; clearly and distinctively *his own*. It may not be what he would have chosen or desired, but it will be just such a one as the Lord sees is best for him to bear. We may look at others, and say, "Ah, they have no such burdens to bear as I have." But did we know all, we should see that the very ones whom we might envy are bearing heavier burdens than we have ever known. Our burdens are seldom so heavy but that we can help others to bear their own. Hence the divine injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." And yet, in the same chapter, he says, "Let every man bear his own burden." Yet, after all this is said, how sweet it is to read, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." It is blessed, indeed, to bear burdens for the Lord, burdens of duty and service.

Merari's work seemed much harder than that of Gershon, but neither complained. All were only too glad, and felt themselves to be too highly honored, to work for the Lord. So may it always be with us!

Verses 40-51. *The enumeration.* Now the test has to be made as to the number of the first-born in Israel, and the number of the Levites. And how astonishing the results are! The first-born of Israel number 22,273, the Levites number 22,000. Here is only a difference of 273! Wonderful arrangement this! These 273 were redeemed by the payment of the prescribed amount, which resulted in 1,365 shekels, and these were devoted to Aaron and his sons. Here is the great idea of *substitution*. We are led at once to consider the objection which is based upon the alleged disproportion between the number of the first-born males, namely, 22,273, and that of the entire number of the males, which is estimated at about 900,000: a representation of one to forty, or forty-four. Two solutions of this difficulty appear to be specially entitled to consideration. The first is that the command contained in Exod. xiii, 2, concerning the sanctification of the first-born was prospective, and that the census of the first-born comprised only those who were born between the date of the exodus and the beginning of the first month of the year which followed it. The second is that the census included only the first-born among them who were under twenty years of age at the time at which the general census was taken.

And this is illustrated by the mode of reckoning the first-born of the cattle. This second solution is that the number of the first-born sons includes only those who were under twenty years of age at the exodus, and who had not been included in the earlier census. This is sustained by the fact (1.) That the phraseology employed, "number the first-born of the males of [or belonging to] the children of Israel," Num. iii, 40, appears to refer to those who, like the Levites, had not been numbered already, and not to the children of Israel themselves, who had been already numbered, and who had already paid the half shekel, every man a ransom for his soul. Exod. xxx, 12. (2.) That the judgment inflicted upon the Egyptians appears to have been limited to the lowest generation, and not to have included father, grandfather, or great-grandfather, when such happened to be first-born sons.

But Christ was taken by the Father in place of the world. His Church is "the Church of the first-born." They are his, as Levi was. They had no other inheritance but in him. They were the Lord's servants. Only a few cities in Israel were given them; for the Lord was their portion. They did his work, and his almighty guardianship was ever over them. And yet, small as was their number, they were exalted by being thus employed. They were the cream of Israel's hosts, the leaders of Israel's thought, the spiritual workers for their interests. No man serves the Lord for naught.

To the Levites were given the first-fruits of the earth, and the finest of the wheat, of lambs, and of goats. They never wanted while they were faithful to God. So Christ says to his Church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. Amen."

CAREFUL GUARDIANSHIP OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

Chapter iv, Verses 1-4.—When the whole number of the Levites was taken, they were not all at once to be employed in the service of the tabernacle. It was only those who had reached the age of thirty years who were to engage in this work. It has been supposed by some that five years were spent in preparation for this service, and that it is in this way that the apparent discrepancy between this verse and Chap. viii, 24, where the age for entering upon the service is fixed at twenty-five, is to be reconciled. No mere novice could do this work. Every one must be thoroughly taught and trained.

We have no idea that these periods have any reference to an entrance upon, or dismissal from, the work of the Christian ministry. It is true that John the Baptist, the morning-star of the Christian dispensation, entered upon his work at this age. Christ was thirty years old when he began his ministry. Sometimes, however, the necessities of the Christian Church have compelled very young and comparatively uncultured men to enter into its service. Some, indeed, as early as sixteen or seventeen years of age have commenced this life-work, and have continued in it until after seventy years

have passed over them. Now these have been exceptional cases, and some may think the course pursued unwarrantable; but the large proportion of Christian ministers begin their work before they have reached thirty years of age. The Christian Church has never regarded itself as limited to this period in employing its ministers. Indeed, at the present period, there is a great demand for young ministers, very young ministers in many instances, while men of age and experience are rejected.

God wants his ministers to be well fitted for their work, and not to engage in it until they are thoroughly prepared. So with the time of leaving the more active and responsible duties of the ministry. It is not required of Christian ministers that they retire from their work when they are fifty years of age. Many, indeed, are effective until after they are seventy years of age. The great Dr. Adam Clarke, the author of the Commentary, was convinced that this Levitical arrangement was binding upon him; and so he would not receive any regular appointment after he had reached that age. I know of no other instance of this class. No doubt many ministers continue to preach longer than their physical or mental abilities would warrant. Two reasons may be given for this: First, because they are unable to live without the salary which their services may continue to command; or, secondly, their dislike for any other position than the pulpit. Like the aged minister who, when compelled by advancing years to give up his

work, said, "Now I shall have to go to church and *hear* preaching."

One thing is very evident: the years between thirty and fifty are, generally, the best of any man's life. His position, his influence, his character are all formed; and, as a rule, he never advances further than he has reached at fifty years. Of course, there are grand and noble exceptions of men who spend from fifty to sixty years in the ministry; but these exceptions are singular and rare.

THE CARE OF THE TABERNACLE IN MARCHING THROUGH
THE WILDERNESS.

Verses 4-46.—To the Kohathites the most solemn charge belonged. But they were not allowed to handle or cover up the vessels of the altar. They were only to bear or carry them. Aaron and his sons were to arrange all for transportation; to take down the vail, to cover the ark of the testimony with it, to put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, to spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and put to the staves thereof. So all things were to be covered by them, and afterward the sons of Kohath were to come and bear them. But they were not to touch any of these holy vessels, "lest they die." Ver. 15. How awe-inspiring were these preparations for removal! True, these were nothing in themselves but articles of wood and gold and silver and brass; but they belonged to God, they were employed in his service, and so demanded the most careful hand-

ling and the most devout regard. And then how carefully did God regard the life of the Levites! Care was to be taken that they were not to come near to, and not even to gaze upon, these holy things. They saw not what they carried. We know that in a subsequent age, when the Bethshemites looked into the ark of the Lord, "He smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men." 1 Sam. vi, 19. How different, in a most important sense, is all this in the dispensation of mercy and love under which we live! Christ, the great Author of our salvation, has been seen of men, and been handled by them. His disciples saw him; ate, drank, walked and talked with him. And even his enemies. How wrongfully they handled him! Now we are invited to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Kohath was not only to bear this burden when the tabernacle was taken down, but also when it was set up. Peter speaks of "putting off his tabernacle;" and Paul says, our "earthly house of this tabernacle will be dissolved." There were two parts of the tabernacle, the outward and the inward. The inward part represents our spiritual and immortal nature, which is first covered by the blood, and borne away by the angels to the heavenly world: and the second, or outward, is that which is dissolved, taken down, and goes into dust; but which is to be set up again in the day of resurrection, reconstructed, and glorified.

THE PURITY AND SANITATION REQUIRED IN THE CAMP.

Chapter v, Verses 1-5.—The tribes now had been mustered and marshaled, and the work of the Levites had been designated. Now attention is given to the encampment. Nothing must defile or pollute it. No leprous person, or one defiled by contact with the dead, must remain in it. All know that the sanitary condition of camps and cities is a matter of the greatest importance. Too little attention is generally given to it, but it is vital to the health and the purity of any community. No camp or city is prepared for its work, or can be kept healthful, unless this work is attended to. The unchecked roaming of persons who have contagious diseases should be prohibited, and the accumulation of filth and dirt must be avoided. No wonder that death lurks in many of our cities in all their streets and alleys. Fevers, pneumonia, cholera, small-pox and diphtheria are the fearful and direful results of such neglect. So divine Providence clearly foresaw what was necessary for the camp of Israel. In it there were millions of souls—men, women, and children, besides their cattle and asses. The accumulation of filth and dirt in such a multitude would be great. Then, too, lepers would be more or less numerous. Here was a wide provision for all these

things. And how weighty the reason for all this! God says, "For I dwell in the midst of the camp."

So must it be in the Christian Church. God means that his Church shall be pure. But O, how much of moral leprosy is in the midst of it! How much of impenitency, unbelief, inward and outward sin! What low ideas of morality, justice, mercy, and truth! How many things are done which are offensive in the sight of heaven! Theater-going, card-playing, promiscuous dancing, dishonesty, corruption, and neglect of religious duty! It is to be feared that some of our churches are little better than pest-houses, which often breed more disease and death than the world around. Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you! If any man defile [destroy] the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii, 16, 17. So he directs that "the fornicator be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." The Church of Christ on earth is to be in a goodly and important sense an image of the Church above. Nothing unholy or unclean, nothing that defileth or maketh a lie, can ever enter there.

Verses 5-10.—*The Law of Restitution.* Some have thought that this should be rendered a "sin

against man." So the Rev. Ver. renders verse 7, "he shall make restitution," instead of "recompense his trespass." Thus, in verse 8, "If the man have no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, the restitution for guilt which is to be made to the Lord shall be the priest's;" ver. 10, "and it shall be his." Defrauding and overreaching, unjust dealings in weight and measure, corrupt transactions in which our brother man is injured, are among the most common sins of our race. Now when a man is made conscious of his sins, and desires to be made right in the sight of God, what is he to do? The first thing is to confess his sin unto God, and, if possible, also to his brother whom he has injured. The next thing he is to do is to make *restitution*—such restitution as he may be able to make. Sometimes it occurs that a person thus awakened to a sense of his sins has not the ability fully to restore that which he once unjustly obtained. What is he then to do? He is to go to the injured party if he is still living, if not, to his nearest kinsman, and confess his guilt and state his condition and his willingness to do any thing in his power to give satisfaction. If he thus does all he can the Lord will forgive him, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the parties interested will also forgive him. But if he is able to make full restitution he must do it, if it takes every dollar he is worth and reduces him to poverty. We have known a man who failed in business, and by his so doing many were injured. Subsequently he began

again to prosper, and with his prosperity came the conviction of his indebtedness and his duty to his creditors. He promised the Lord that if he would continue to prosper him he would pay every one of them with interest. And so he traveled hundreds of miles, wrote numerous letters, and made different inquiries for his creditors. Some had died, others had gone far away, and for a while he knew not where they had gone. But one by one he found them out, and paid them in full with added interest. It took him years to do it, but he did it fully and faithfully. But suppose that no one is living to whom this restitution should be made; what then? The answer to the Jew was, Give it to the priest. To Christians it would be, it must be given to God, for the good of his cause and for the interests of humanity. The money certainly does not belong to the party who has done the wrong. He has no righteous or legal claim to it. It will be a curse to him and his family if he keeps it. *Restitution must be made.* It sometimes has been said of late concerning men who have been thought guilty of crooked and wicked transactions, that they have endeavored, instead of doing right to those whom they have wronged, to build a church or theological seminary, or to do some other good thing. This charge should not be made inconsiderately. If the person is unable to find those whom he has wronged, this, certainly, would be God's method of settling the business. This might be called substitutionary restitution.

Like the man in New York city who got rich by making short weight in his coal. God's Spirit got hold of his heart, and he was brought to see his condition. At first he thought, in view of his sin and the impossibility of his making restitution, that he never could be a Christian. The persons whom he had defrauded, in many instances, were dead; others were unknown. What should he do? He called upon ministers and counseled with them. He asked them if they thought the substitution of a gift to the poor would be a proper restitution. They advised him to try it. He accordingly gave a large donation, more than equal, he thought, to his unjust gains, and then sought forgiveness from the Lord. He was happily converted, and lived long a prominent and useful member of the Church. But if restitution had not been made God would not have forgiven him. Matthew Henry well says: "What is not our property will never be our profit."

Verses 11-31.—*The Law of Jealousy.* There is nothing which tends more fully to embitter the marital cup than jealousy. Every thing which would inspire it or occasion it should be most carefully guarded against. When it takes possession of a man or woman it is cruel as the grave. This detective policy was peculiarly and necessarily Jewish. There is such a thing as trial by red water among the tribes of Western Africa, which bears a resemblance to this, and which is still in use. The Jewish fathers say that if the woman acknowledged her

guilt, and said, "I am defiled," she was not put to death, but divorced, and thus lost her dowry; but if she said "I am pure," the trial proceeded. It is useless for us to follow the details of this law, but there is one part which it is well to consider. Jewish authorities state if the husband had at any time defiled the marriage-bed God did not thus right him against his injured wife. It was well that there was such a law for the sake of pure, innocent woman. If she were innocent, the fact would be instantly and clearly known; if guilty, her punishment would be inflicted. How many women at the present day would be proven guilty if such an arrangement were in use! But, unfortunately for the best interests of the nation, this law became very loosely practiced, and, finally, it fell into desuetude and decay. No doubt many a woman has been murdered by an enraged and jealous husband. Many a woman has been unjustly charged, and her life made bitter by the rage and cruelty of her jealous husband, who might have proved herself innocent if such a law had only been in force. Now no means exist except personal detection; and yet it is surprising how common the crime is. Our daily papers are full of notices of the most fearful character, and of the punishment, immediate and fatal, which enraged men inflict upon the seducers of their wives. But, on the other hand, if women could know the guilt of their husbands, how many now bright and beautiful homes would be broken up!

THE NAZARITE.

Chapter vi, Verses 1-22.—The word Nazarite, נָזִיר, signifies one consecrated and devoted, when it is applied to persons. This, indeed, is its prime idea. It was applied to an Israelite when he bound himself by a vow to abstain from certain things, and to devote himself, for a time at least, wholly unto the Lord. Hence in verse 2 the person becoming a Nazarite vows to separate himself unto the Lord. So in God's complaint against his people in Amos ii, 11, 12, he says, "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. . . . But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink." The Nazarites were regarded as especially holy men, giving the most of their time to the law and religious observances. They were looked upon as purer than snow, and whiter than milk. Lam. iv, 7. Our blessed Lord himself was called a Nazarite, although not so in view of this law; for he touched lepers and dead bodies and was clean. But he was the great antitype, the embodiment of purity, the highest form of the Nazarite ideal. It is a matter of joyous wonder that all through God's word, in every type and shadow, in every form and ceremony, in every sacrifice and symbol, holiness is the great ideal. And we see further, that here, in the

following class of persons this ideal was realized and exhibited to the world. Some thus consecrated themselves to the Lord for a short period ; others by divine ordination and designation were consecrated to God for the whole of their lives. It was said to Samson's mother, that he should be a Nazarite to God from the womb. Judg. xiii, 5. The mother of Samuel vowed unto the Lord that if he would give her the son she asked, " Then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." The angel told Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, that he shall " be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink ; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Luke i, 15. Others were consecrated for only a limited period ; but whether for life, or for a limited period, the great idea concerning them was that they were wholly separated unto God for his service and glory. They were not to mingle with common or ordinary things ; they were to give all their time to the Lord. Then they were to drink no wine, because that might produce mental hallucinations ; and their strength was not to be reduced by the polling of their hair. There was to be no contamination by their touching dead bodies, and no uncleanness for even his brother and sisters. But " all the days of his separation " he was to be " holy unto the Lord." Not by outward observances merely ; but in his inward experience and in his outward life. So with the Christian Nazarite. He is not to

be "conformed to this world," but to be "transformed" by the "renewing of his mind." He is to "come out from among them," to be "separate"—the very idea of the Nazarite, "saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty."

Another thing to be noticed here is, that this separation was *voluntary* and in full accordance with the self-determination of the will power. The Nazarite, of his own choice, vowed a vow that for a certain time at least he would be all the Lord's. This indicated his conscious choice. He could make the vow, or he could decline to do so. If he made it, it was voluntary, but not so his adherence to his vow. When the vow was made he was obliged to keep it, or suffer the penalty of the neglect or violation of it. In all his dealings with men, God recognizes and honors their will power. No one is coerced into his service. No one is over-constrained to set himself apart for God. If a man do it, it must be by the determination of his will, aided by the grace of God. And so it is with Christian holiness—the New Testament idea of Nazaritism. Men must first of all, by the Spirit of God, *will* to be all the Lord's. They must will to give up themselves, the world, and sin, and every wrong thing, and to be separated to God forever. This is of themselves, aided and strengthened by the Spirit of the Lord. And, if they thus vow to give

up themselves to God, and separate themselves to his service, then the Lord will accept their offering, put his seal upon them, sanctifying them "wholly" and preserving them "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Those Nazarites to God were among the brightest shining lights of the Jewish dispensation. Their luster brightened it, and their consecration hallowed it. They were all the Lord's, and so were lifted up above the ordinary Jews in their character and in their conduct. So those persons who, under the Christian dispensation, have given themselves up wholly to God have been among the brightest lights the world ever saw. Were not Luther and Wesley and Rutherford and Fletcher and Thomas à Kempis, and a host of others, the lights of the world because of their consecration and their separation from the world? And is it not so now? The more complete the consecration and separation the more blessed and wide-spread and divine is the light which shines out from this holy character. And will it not continue to be so more and more? As the millennium approaches, will not the heavenly radiance of such persons be vastly increased and broadened and glorious? Will not every Christian then be truly a Nazarite unto God?

But there were certain conditions of Nazariteship then, as there are now. First of all, the Nazarite was to be a total abstainer. "He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink,

neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine-tree, from the kernels even to the husk." *This is the strongest total abstinence pledge ever drawn in this world; and it was drawn by God.* True, this was limited in its application; but it was evidently designed to be universal. No man who gives himself up to the wine-cup can be wholly separated to God. There must be a separation from these things. As men draw consciously near to God there will be an abandonment of intoxicants. It is the revival of holiness in our churches which has pushed the great temperance cause of the present day to the magnificent results already realized, and to the promise of grander results in the near future. Holiness in all the ages is on the side of total abstinence. It is the perpetual and everlasting conquerer of the rum-fiend. As it spreads he disappears. This is the only strong, vital force which can meet and overcome him. This, the power of the pentecost, the power of Nazaritism, is *the* power by which this work will be wrought. Christ's command to his Church is, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves," not in bacchanalian songs, but . . . "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This is the plectrum with which we are to strike the notes of our victory and triumph.

2. Their hair was to remain uncut. Ver. 5. In the olden time the growth of the hair was thought

to be indicative of strength. This idea may have originated in many minds from the strength in Samson's unshorn locks. But, whatever the cause, this has very generally been thought to be the case. This was done, we think, that it might be clearly indicated that nothing was to emasculate, or effeminate the persons thus set apart. And is it not so now? The person who would be all the Lord's must give up every thing which would mar or weaken him, or enfeeble his religious character or life. If the long hair indicated strength, then the Christian man, fully consecrated to God, is not to regard the outward sign merely, but *every thing which is meant by it*. There are those who take upon themselves the vows of holiness, who spoil all by clinging to certain things which are manifestly opposed to it. And hence, while they should be mighty against the hosts of enemies around them, they are often poor and weak as other men are. "The little foxes spoil the vines." Whether it be in the dress, in the manners, in the conversation, in outward deportment, if it minifies holiness, it should be eliminated from us. It has been thought by some that long hair is a *token of subjection*. So Paul is regarded as teaching in 1 Cor. xi, 5. Well, let it be so. And then what does this indicate to the spiritually minded person? Why, surely, that the Christian Nazarite is entirely under subjection to God. And this he is, this he must be. If he is all the Lord's, then surely he is under the divine subjection and control in all things. "But now being made

free from sin, and become a servant [a slave] unto God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." All the time he is a servant, a bond-servant, to God forever.

3. All who saw these persons knew that they were Nazarites. Their unshorn locks told at once their real character. No one could doubt as to who they were, or as to what was their character or life. This was their badge, their distinctive appearance, and clearly showed their condition. In like manner the holy Christian will readily impress the mind and heart of those by whom he is surrounded that he belongs to Christ; that he is devoted to his service, and that his life is spent for his glory.

4. Furthermore, he was not to touch any dead body, not even of those who were dearest to him. This would produce defilement, and make it necessary for him to recommence his consecration and his life of separation, so carefully was his outward purity of character shielded. And how beautifully this illustrates the character of the holy Christian! He is not only commanded to an utter comestoutism from the world, and a complete separation from it; but also not to "touch any unclean thing." A pure, beautiful white garment will readily show the slightest speck. So the heart, purified by the blood of Christ, and consecrated to his service, will clearly show any spot or stain which may come upon it. The consecrated Christian is to be pure, holy; to be without spot or blame before God. "If

he varies from this, if he is stained, or polluted, or if he is only defiled in a slight degree, how quickly the keen eye of the worldling, or the eye of the pharisaical professor of religion will discover it, and how it will militate against the cause of Christ! No one who aims to be a holy Christian should fail to keep his "garments unspotted from the world." And, if we trust in Christ, he can so keep us. He will not only "sanctify us wholly, but will preserve us blameless unto his coming."

5. *The Christian Nazarite's vow is for life.* With him, this consecration is not merely for eight days, or for a month, or a year; but it is for life. All the days of his life he is to be all the Lord's. But how rapidly and how sweetly these days pass away, and how soon will they be gone! Then will come on the full reward and the everlasting joy. Then amid the glories of that heavenly world, amid the bliss of the eternal temple of God, he will serve him day and night forever. No fears then of falling, no consciousness of defects, no dread of defilement, no shrinking from touching the unclean thing. No; for then he will be with God forever. O blessed result for so short a consecration and separation in a world of sin and sorrow! Here we have constantly to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation; to struggle against opposing powers. Here Satan appears to deceive and destroy. But there our watchfulness ends; and prayer is lost in everlasting praise. Then the saved soul will be eternally secure.

THE BENEDICTION OF THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANTS.

Chapter vi, Verses 22-27.—The priests, the ministers of the Lord our God, are ordained not only to offer sacrifices of prayer and praise, not only to instruct and comfort the people; but they are also to pronounce blessings upon them in the name of the Lord. Both under the Law and under the Gospel these blessings were formally prepared, and formally commanded to be used. “The occasions on which this blessing was used are not recorded. The blessing itself, which marks in a special manner the spiritual character of the chosen people, consists of three double clauses. In each of these clauses the sacred name of Jehovah is repeated, and there is a rising gradation in the blessing invoked, until it culminates in that peace which is the highest of those gifts which God can bestow and that man can possess. There has been commonly recognized in this blessing an allusion to the Trinity. Mention is made in Lev. ix, 22, of a blessing pronounced by Aaron upon the people, but no form of words is found there.”* The blessing here is threefold: in the Gospel it is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Ghost. The blessings here pronounced are rich and great: so the grace and love and communion of the Gospel are beyond description. The blessings are from the Lord, but his servants are authorized to pronounce them. It is remarkable how little estimate is placed upon this form of our public service; and still more wonderful that God, the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, should condescend to bless his creatures, and more especially his people, so abundantly. But these are his own words: "On this wise [in this manner] shall ye bless the children of Israel."

I. "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee." "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." This promise, "I will bless you," is often repeated, and in a variety of forms. For instance, in the twenty-eighth and thirty-third chapters of Deuteronomy how these promises of blessings are multiplied. God is the God of blessings. He wills to do us good. If his conditions are only met there is no end to his favors. "If he smile, a frowning universe cannot harm us; but if he frown, no smiles can cheer us." Blessings are promised for soul and body, for wife and children, for estate and cattle, for the ground and its fruits, for all spiritual and temporal interests, for time and for eternity. They cover all classes and all conditions; they reach to every case. We never weary in thinking of his mercies. And did we rightly comprehend all, how it would cheer our hearts! "The Lord bless thee." From whom does this blessing

come? Not from the priest, or minister; it is the Lord—Jehovah—whose blessing is pronounced. And this is not meant to be a mere formal matter. It means just what it says, and infinitely more than we can understand. The Gospel declares the Father sent his Son to bless us. What a life of benediction was his! When he sat on the Mount of Beatitudes, his first utterance was a blessing. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” And so he proceeded to bless the characters who were dear to his heart of love. The last act his disciples saw him perform was when he was leaving this world. “He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” Nor has he ceased to bless his people yet. His servants are still blessing his people in his name; and his hands are still outstretched in blessings upon all.

2. But if the blessing is great, so also is the *keeping*. Next to His saving blessings are his keeping blessings. These are most wonderful. That little word “keep” is one of the grandest in the Bible. Not only so, it is one of the most frequently used. It is employed over one hundred and fifty times to encourage and comfort his people. Nothing can comfort more than this. The *necessity* for it every true child of God has always felt, and always feels. He cannot keep himself. He is powerless in the midst of a multitude of foes. He is weak as a bruised reed, frail and feeble. But Jehovah can

keep him—can keep him so that no power shall be able to pluck him out of his hand. No one *can* harm him while he is a follower of that which is good. And how he has kept his people! In fiery furnaces and lions' dens; in the prison and at the stake; at home and in exile; in the city and in the country; in tumultuous joy and overwhelming sorrow; in life and in death. So the great apostle to the Gentiles testified: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to *keep* that which I have committed unto him against that day." It is one of the grandest miracles of grace for the Christian to be kept in the midst of the evil that is in the world unto eternal life.

3. "Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Here are *light* and *grace*. The shining of God's face upon the soul is the brightest radiance in the universe. Often does the royal Psalmist pray for this—the light of God's countenance. Nothing is so dear to the soul as this. It signifies his divine favor to us, and his divine acceptance of us. It certainly implies the forgiveness of our sins and our justification in his sight. The Lord can never look with favor upon sinners. The scowl of divine wrath is upon those who violate his laws. It must be so. He cannot look upon sin against himself or against his creatures with complacency. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." But upon the repentant, believing, and obedient soul he lifts the light of his countenance. It shines upon them as consciously, but

even more brilliantly, than the light of the sun, scattering every cloud of doubt and fear, and making all within them to rejoice. Thus the child of God "walks in the light of the Lord." He does not "walk in darkness, but in the light of life:" Blessed, indeed, in this state! In all the conditions of life, in all its various relations, nothing is more cheering to the soul than this heavenly light. It brightly shines over all life's pathway, and illumines with its radiance the "valley and shadow of death." Indeed, it is heaven begun below. Saints in heaven behold this light in its fullness and glory. We only have it in a measure—a small degree; we could not bear to see it as they do. But what we do enjoy of it here is heaven begun below, and makes us "sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."

In addition to this, it is said, "Jehovah be gracious unto thee." All we have or enjoy in this world is *gracious*. There is no blessing, however small, which comes to us according to our merit or desert. We have no merit; our only desert is perdition. In the sight of God, all unrenewed men are regarded as guilty, ruined, and lost. If, therefore, any intelligent creature of God is blessed, or saved, it is all of mercy and grace. So with every favor we enjoy; every crumb of food, every shred of clothing, every roof over our heads, every couch on which we lie, every friend whom we enjoy—all, all are from the grace of God. When Joseph saw his youngest brother Benjamin, after long years had passed, when his eyes were filled with tears and

his utterance was choked with his emotions, he said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." Gen. xliii, 29. So when Moses desired to see the glory of the Lord, he appeared to him, saying, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." And he will be gracious to his people, and to all who call upon his name. All we enjoy is of grace. Redemption, salvation, and eternal life are not by merit, or good works, but by grace.

We live under a gracious dispensation—not one of law. And so all creatures are dealt with graciously for Christ's sake. No man lives but his very life is all of grace. But to his chosen people who can tell how gracious he is? In all their afflictions, sorrows, and trials he manifests himself to them in mercy, grants to them his loving favor, and satisfies them with his heavenly grace.

4. "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." This is an emblem taken from the sun coming up from his chambers, and bursting forth upon the world in his glory. So the Lord lifted up the light of his countenance upon his saints. This is a distinguishing blessing. There are many who say to his people, "Who will show you any good?" But their cry is still, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." So it is in the light of his countenance they walk, and in his name they rejoice all the day long. *Peace* also is given them; for he is the Lord God of peace. The peace which he gives "passeth all understanding." Christ said himself, "Peace I leave

with you, my peace give I unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is a peace which floweth like a river, for it comes from an exhaustless source. Wonderful, then, we see are all these benedictions! And it is a pleasant surprise to see how nearly those under the law correspond with those under the Gospel. Let me now place them before my readers, that they may understand their meaning and their force:

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| 1. "The Lord bless thee and keep thee." | 1. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," sovereign, saving, keeping. |
| 2. "The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." | 2. "The love of God the Father." He loves his people, and is gracious unto them. |
| 3. "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." | 3. "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." This is the light of God shining in the soul, and the peace which the Holy Ghost brings into the soul. |

Thus for the ages, for four thousand years, these benedictions have been uttered by priest and preacher upon the people of God, and the world has been remembered by him who loves them, and gave his only Son to die for them. The blessings thus breathed upon them have been among the choicest and gladdest experiences of their life.

Finally, the Lord says, "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." It is thought to be a great thing in this

world when a great financier, or well-known business man will say to a young man, "You can use my name." But here the Lord Jehovah puts his name upon his people. Thus the Son of God says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will give it unto you," or "I will do it." His indorsement is upon all our paper. The bank of heaven can never refuse it. This Name is the strong tower into which his people run. So let all his people remember, when they come to him, that their petition, their request, bears his name, and it cannot be turned away. God will answer. Am I irreverent when I say, God *must* answer? And he will bless his people always, even for evermore.

PRINCES OFFERING TO GOD.

Chapter vii, Verses 1-89.—The tabernacle is founded. The priestly and Levitical offices are arranged. The benediction is assured. What more is needed? It is not to be forgotten that the children of Israel were itinerant wanderers in the wilderness, and they could not stay long in a place. There was much connected with the service of the tabernacle which was burdensome—boards, pillars, poles, curtains, coverings, furniture were all to be removed every time the pillar of cloud and fire gave indication that they were to remove from the place of their encampment. In this emergency twelve princes of Israel came forward with their offerings to the service of this house of the Lord. Their offerings occupied twelve days, the sacrifices being too numerous to be offered at the same time. The expression therefore “on the day,” here and in verse 10, must be understood, as in many other places in the Scriptures, as signifying, “at the time.” The tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year, and the events recorded in this and the preceding chapters appear to have taken place on and after the second month of that year. It appears from a comparison of *Exod. xl, 7*, with *Num. x, 11*, that fifty days

intervened between the erection of the tabernacle and the beginning of the march from Sinai.* The offering consisted of six covered wagons, or litters. The Vulgate calls them *plaustra tecta*. Of these, four wagons and eight oxen were given to Merari, and to him the lot fell of bearing the heavier portions of the tabernacle.

1. The gifts offered were from the princes of Israel, and consisted not only of wagons and oxen, but also of silver chargers, and bowls and spoons of gold, and bullocks and rams, lambs and goats—all for the service of the sanctuary. No doubt these princes of Israel had larger wealth than the ordinary people. It is hardly, however, to be supposed that they all had wealth alike. And yet, in this large contribution, they all gave alike. And it seems, further, that they all gave cheerfully and voluntarily. So much that it seems remarkable that a people so recently redeemed from bondage should contribute so liberally and largely, and without any conditions. They simply offered them to the Lord, leaving his servants, into whose hands they might fall, to direct and dictate, under divine guidance, how they should be employed.

2. It should be noted further, that every thing which they gave was to be used. It was not merely for ornamentation, but for utility. So God gave to Moses direction, ver. 5: "Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto

* Ellicott.

the Levites, to every man according to his service." Here, we think, may be seen the shadowing of the great law of Christian giving. While all gave something, all gave alike, all gave what was valuable, and all gave according to the divine order, or plan. Oftentimes rich men, in their penuriousness, expect the poor to give as much as they give. This, certainly, is not God's requirement. There is only one great law of giving under the Christian dispensation. "Let every man give as God hath prospered him." This he is to do regularly, at set times—"on the first day of the week"—so that his habit of giving is fixed and formed, and enters into every arrangement of his life. The rich often spend a very large part of their income upon their own homes, their furniture, carriages and horses, servants, clothing, pleasure, etc. Then, when asked for something for God's cause, they will reply, "I cannot afford it." What an account such persons will have to give at the judgment seat of Christ! This great law has never yet been fully understood, or fully acted upon. Men often give from impulse, from vanity, from political motives, or personal ambition. How few truly give to God, according to his requirement, and on his plan. The great rule of Christian giving is to do it with simplicity, to open the hands wide. But, in many instances, how much pleading, how much sagacity is necessary to secure contributions from the rich. All this will be changed by and by. Men will *bring* their offerings unto the Lord.

3. These contributions were timely and appropriate. There were twelve chargers of silver for the table of the Lord. And was it not meet and right that the table of the great King of kings and Lord of Israel should be served in silver plate? These silver dishes were to be kept filled with meat of the sacrifices offered to the Lord. The silver bowls were also to be filled with the blood of sacrifice. The spoons which were offered were probably such as were used in Egyptian temples, and still depicted on them as borne in the hands of the king. These spoons were in the shape of an outstretched arm, the hand forming the bowl. In the Egyptian temples such spoons were filled with a vase of burning incense, or a terra-cotta cone, emblematic of a mountain, and were presented in symbolic adoration to Amun Ray, the supreme, or Osiris, Kneph and Chonzo, primary deities of Egypt. Some, indeed, have thought that the spoons dedicated by the princes were part of the spoil extorted by fear from their oppressors, when they left Egypt on that night of blood and darkness and death. No doubt Israel was greatly enriched by the spoils of their former oppressors. It is written: "They spoiled Egypt." The silver and the gold were of immense value in these gifts, containing two thousand four hundred shekels of silver, and one hundred and twenty shekels of gold. The animals given in sacrifice were for immediate use, while the silver and gold were for the ages. Well could they afford to give these beasts for sacrifice, not only for the

reason above mentioned but also because they needed not meat for their families, as they were daily fed from heaven.

Is it not so in the Christian Church? Men still dedicate to God churches, institutions of learning, large sums of money for missions, the Bible cause, great eleemosynary institutions for the sick, the blind, the imbecile, the aged, and the orphan—some for immediate use, and some to last during the centuries.

4. God has kept in his word a faithful account of their gifts. All gave precisely alike; but each one's gift is as exactly mentioned as if he had been the only giver. Then the aggregate is clearly made up, so that there could possibly be no misunderstanding as to the results of this remarkable donation. It has come down to us for nearly thirty-five hundred years as clear and as well understood as on the day they were given. These gifts were not all made in *one day* but for *twelve days* they were brought in, beginning with Judah and ending with Naphtali. No doubt some tribes were more wealthy than others, yet all gave the same. All were equally interested in the tabernacle, and in its altar-service; all had an equal share in its benefits. It is somewhat remarkable that Nahshon, of the tribe of Judah, is the only one who is not expressly called a prince. The Jewish writers account for this as follows: "He is not called a prince, that he might not be puffed up because he offered first; all the others are called princes, because they, (some

of them at least of the elder house, submitted and offered after him." Or, it may have been, because the title of the Prince of Judah belonged solely to the coming Messiah, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and "unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

These facts, so full of interest, are still further emblematical of Christian benevolence, of Christian liberality; and, as such, are deserving of the consideration of every true Christian.

Verse 89.—Here is another fact in this chapter which certainly claims our attention; namely, God spake to Moses familiarly from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim. This was wonderful! "As if," says Bishop Patrick, "he had been clothed with a body which might be looked upon as an earnest of the incarnation of the Son of God, in the fullness of time, when the Word should be made flesh and speak in the language of the sons of men. For however God at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers in times past, he has in these last days certainly spoken to us by his Son. That it was he who now spoke to Moses as the Shekinah, a divine Majesty, from between the cherubim, and was the second Person in the blessed Trinity, was the pious thought of many of the ancients; for all God's revelation and communion with man is by his Son, by whom, also, he made the world and rules the Church, and who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever."

Through this divine communication, made in connection with this history of benevolence in the early Jewish Church which is in many respects a model for the Christian Church, shines forth the clear radiance fore-announcing the coming of the Christ "who is God over all, blessed forever."

How many instances of liberality to the cause of God might be given that would show forth the spirit which characterized the princes. I only can notice one. At a missionary meeting in Scotland a poor servant-girl stopped at the door, where the deacons always stood to receive the donations, and dropped a sovereign into the box. One of the deacons said to her, "I am sure you cannot afford to give this." "O, yes, I can!" "Do take it back," he said. She replied, "O, no; I must give it." The deacon then said, "Take it home to-night, and, if after thinking of it during the night you choose to give it, you can send it." The next morning she sent a note containing two sovereigns. Some one said to the good deacon, "Of course you must not take it." He said, "I shall; for if I send it back she will send *four* the next time." So we are to give.

"Give as the morning that flows out of heaven;
Give as the waves when the channel is riven;
Give as the free air and sunshine are given;
Lavishly, utterly, joyously give.
Not the waste drops of thy cup overflowing,
Not the faint sparks of thy hearth ever glowing,
Not a pale bud from the June roses blooming;
Give as He gave thee who gives thee to live."

THE LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

Chapter viii, Verses 1-5.—No part of these emblematical writings is richer than this. Indeed, these very emblems, as we shall see, were used by New Testament writers in describing the Gospel and its influence among men. For instance, here is the candlestick, curiously made, of “beaten,” that is, turned or twisted gold. The description of it as ordered and made is found in Exod. xxv, 31-37; xxxvii, 17-23. It is called “the seven golden candlesticks.” There was first the central stand; then, on either side, were three branches, making seven in all. This was the pattern shown to Moses in the mount. This golden candlestick was placed against the south wall of the tabernacle, opposite to the table of show-bread, so that its seven branches were parallel to that wall, with its branches east and west, and, consequently, the seven lamps, one of which rested upon each of the seven branches, threw their light in front of the candlestick, that is, toward the north wall, by which arrangement the furniture of the holy place was more effectually lighted than it would have been had the candlestick been placed facing the entrance, with its branches north and south.*

This candlestick was made of pure gold. So the Lord designs that his Church shall be pure and holy. There is to be no alloy, no baseness in it; but all is to be pure and precious. Then it was of *beaten* gold; beaten so it might be rightly formed and shaped. God's purest gold, in all dispensations, passes through great tribulation, a fearful threshing-machine, so that it might be fitted and prepared for its position and its work. Then it was made to be the source of light; on all these seven standards the candles, or lamps, were to be constantly burning. They were to throw their light "over against the candlestick;" in other words, upon that part of the tabernacle where the table stood with the show-bread upon it.

Now let us turn to Rev. i, 12, 13. There we read: "And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Look again, at verse 20: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are seven churches." Here we see that Christ himself is the great central light of his Church, ever shining bright and clear; while his churches are on either side of him. He is in the midst of them, and they, lighted from him and by him, shed the same radiance upon this darkened world. Is the

question asked, "Who lighted these lamps?" We answer, "Aaron, the high-priest of the Lord;" he only was authorized to do it. He lighted the central light from the altar, and the other six were lighted from the center. How full of the Gospel is this fact! Christ is the Light of the world; the central light. All his churches are lighted from him, are made to shine by him; their light is derived from him. He shines *in* them all and *through* them all. Unless they shine by him they do not, will not, shine at all. But if they are united to him they will let their light *so* shine that others seeing their good works will glorify our Father which is in heaven. The Church looks up to him, and says, "Thou wilt light my candle." And again it is said, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." All the members of that Church "walk as children of light." This is so true that if any one "says he is in him and walks in darkness, he lies and does not the truth." This is the light of this poor, dark world. Here we see are *seven* lamps. Seven is a perfect number; and this shows that the light is a perfect light, the glorious light of the blessed Gospel of Christ. There is enough of this light always shining to point the world to the Bread of Life, ever standing ready to feed a starving world, as well as its radiance to illumine a darkened world. Wonderful light! Wonderful Gospel! Wonderful Christ!

Verses 5-23. — *The consecration of the Levites.* We have now come to the beautiful service of the consecration of the Levites. We shall see, also, how this, from the dim, distant ages of the past, is typical of the gospel dispensation in the consecration of its ministers.

1. In the first place let us mark this, *They were to be distinctly set apart for their work.* There is an effort being made at the present day, in certain quarters, to reduce the ministers of Christ to the ranks of the laymen, and to assume that they have no higher call than laymen have. This is entirely out of harmony with God's plan. Doubtless laymen are called to speak, as well as to live, for Christ; but they are not *all* distinctively called to be God's ministers, and to devote all their time to his work.

2. They were to be *called* to this work. They did not take this honor upon themselves. They were chosen in the place of the first-born of Israel. And now and here they were solemnly set apart for their work. They were separated, taken out from among the children of Israel; their life-work was henceforward before them. They were never to leave it, only by the command of God, or at the time which he had ordained. Henceforth they belonged only to God, and to the service of his tabernacle.

3. They were to be *cleansed*. This was a three-fold process. Moses was to sprinkle water of purifying upon them; they were to shave all their flesh, and to wash their clothes, and so make them-

selves clean. So every minister of Christ must be a cleansed, purified man. He must be pure in his character, pure in his person, pure in his life. They must be "clean who bear the vessels of the Lord." No man has a right to be a minister unless he is pure, and the element of holiness is largely developed in his character and life. His services will not be measured so much by what he *says*, or what he *does*, but by what he *is*. He might be the most noble and eloquent of speakers; but if there is a taint of suspicion upon his character all his efforts will be vain. We have known of some of the most able and eloquent men that the pulpit ever contained who were condemned to silence and infamy because of habits of inebriety. There is nothing at the present day which throws the shadow of a deeper discouragement upon the Church of God than to see so many of its ministers indifferent to this great qualification. What does this sprinkling of water signify but the sprinkling of the blood of Christ? And this typical fact clearly argues to all ministers that they are to be "cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." The Hebrew word (*hattath*) means literally, water of sin, or of sin-offering, as in the case of holy water, to which reference is made in chap. vi, 17; but no explanation is given of the particular water which was to be used in the cleansing of the Levites. It was doubtless the water appointed to be used in the purification from sin.*

* *Vide* Ellicott, *in loco*.

4. They were to be *ordained by the children of Israel*. They were to put their hands upon them, as they stood before the Lord. This was subsequently to the offering of a young bullock, with his meat-offering; and another for a sin-offering. Then "Aaron was to offer them up before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord." This laying on of hands by the children of Israel was a signification of the acceptance by them of this divine arrangement, and of their obligation to maintain and support them in their calling and in their work.

As to the method of Aaron's offering them up before the Lord there is a difference of opinion among learned exegetes. Some think it may have been done by leading them backward and forward in front of the tabernacle, and in presence of the people. Others by the waving of Aaron's hands. The literal reading of verse 11 is, "Aaron shall wave the Levites as a wave-offering before the Lord." It seems to us that as the twenty-three thousand Levites stood up in the front of the tabernacle, in the presence of the thousands and ten thousands of Israel, Aaron lifted his hands and waved them as a token that they were henceforth dedicated to the service of God.

How interesting and how solemn was all this transaction! In all the future ages they were not to have any inheritance among the people of Israel; and in all the ages God was to be their

inheritance. So in all the ages, relieved from all secular employments, they were only to serve the Lord their God. How much pains does God take to distinguish and set apart his servants! And if so under the former dispensation, how much more so under the Christian dispensation. In this dispensation every thing, so far as possible, is spiritual. The call of God, the authority of the Church, the ordination of men to the service of God, show how the Lord still regards his ministers. And well is it that it is so. They are to be holy men, for a holy work, in a holy place. Like Cæsar's wife, they are to be above suspicion. Their character and their life must be pure and consecrated. And all this was "that there might be no plague among the children of Israel." In this dedication of the Levites, who were especially to attend to this service, as well as to be trained for it, there would be no exposure to sins of omission or commission; no irregularity in the services of the sanctuary; no improper offering made, and no improper service performed. Thus God's anger would be withheld from them, and his blessing be enjoyed by them.

Verses 24-26. — *The time-limit of their service.* This is here said to be from twenty-five to fifty, but in chap. iv, 3, 23, 30, it is said to be from *thirty* to fifty. In the time of David the Levites were admitted to service at twenty years of age. 1 Chron. xxiii, 27: "For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and

above." Thus this time-limit was not absolute. Their service in the wilderness and in the early periods of their settlement in the land of Canaan was doubtless more difficult and laborious than it was under the latter period of David's reign, and during the whole of that of Solomon's, and the kings succeeding him; and so they could commence their work earlier, and, mayhap, they continued it later. And thus understood it furnishes no absolute rule for any minister in the Christian dispensation, either as to the time of his entering upon his work, or to the time of retiring from it. All this must be left to the orderings and permissions of divine Providence. Then, again, it is possible that the earlier years referred to here, twenty-five, and in Chronicles twenty years, were the periods when they began to study or prepare for their work.

But, first of all, they were to devote themselves to the study of the law. Their time was thus largely employed. So we read in the days of Ezra that the Levites named in Neh. viii, 7, 8, "Caused the people to understand the law; and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Many of them became very learned in the law; and so were enabled to teach it to the people, and to make them understand its wondrous meaning. No minister is fitted for his position unless he carefully study the word of God.

But how many do not even quote it correctly,

or but seldom refer to it in their sermons. The only recognition many so-called ministers give of that word is in the text; after this any thing and every thing else is proclaimed to the people. But what is that so-called preaching worth, which excludes the real substance of all true preaching? How dead and dull to the ears and hearts of the people! Only "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Nothing else can do it. This is God's instrument for this work, and when he employs it he makes it mighty. Christ's ministers are not to offer bloody sacrifices; but they are always to present the blood of Christ as the only thing in the universe which "cleanseth us from all sin."

2. The Levites also sang the praises of the Lord. All down the centuries their trained voices rang in the tabernacle and in the temple of the Lord. No such music, we conceive, was ever heard in this world as the grand old Hebrew psalms in the service of God's house! No wonder that the enemies of Israel, who had carried away its sons and daughters captives to the land of Babylon, required of them a song, and they that wasted them required of them mirth, saying, "Sing unto us one of the songs of Zion." But as they wept under the willows on the banks of the Euphrates, as they remembered Zion, no wonder that they hung their harps on them, "in the midst thereof." When, however, they were at home, amid the grand and sublime accompaniments of the temple service, with

the aid of every instrument known in the world at command, and with the responsive voices of countless thousands, even of millions, in their three great festivals, the music and the melody must have been inspiring and enrapturing. The question as to music in our Christian Churches seems to be settled here. There was music in the tabernacle and the temple: there is music in the heaven to which we are going; let us have music here. Amen.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

Chapter 9, Verses 1-6. — The passover was the most solemn and suggestive institution in the Jewish Church. It was so in itself. It was the remembrance of plagues, of darkness, of fire, and of death. It told of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, and of their own deliverance from the destroying angel's arm. It also pointed onward to Christ, who is our Passover. Thus, it not only led them to look backward over the past; but, also, to look toward the future. Then the ceremonies of the passover were eminently instructive. The lamb slain, the blood caught in the basin, the hyssop branch dipped in the blood, and then the blood sprinkled upon the two door-posts, and the upper post; but none was sprinkled on the door-sill, for it was not to be trampled upon. There was further the unleavened bread, the loins girt about and the staff in hand, to indicate that they were all ready for departure to their Canaan home. How typical was all this! They had now been on their journeyings for a whole year, and the time had come for its anniversary observance. Hence the command given in this chapter, which was cheerfully and universally obeyed. And yet the thought is a solemn one that there was no provision for a continued observ-

ance of this original command in the wilderness. After its primary observance in Egypt, and its observance in the wilderness, they were commanded to observe it the next year in the land of Canaan. But, alas! their unbelief and rebellion prevented this. Well does Ellicott say, "Had it not been for the rebellion of the people, the next passover after the original Egyptian one would have been celebrated in the land of Canaan, and it was for that one only that provision had been made." Exod. xii, 25. The passover was emblematical of the Lord's Supper. The change in the ordinance, indeed, is very slight. Our Lord and his disciples had kept the passover on the night of his betrayal; and just after this, he took the same bread used for the passover, and it was the same cup of wine of which he said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which was shed for you." And this substitution, based so directly upon the passover, and telling so completely of the Saviour's sufferings and death, has been celebrated for nineteen hundred years; while the passover was celebrated for fifteen hundred years before this, making three thousand four hundred years in all of the passover and the Lord's Supper.

But while the passover was omitted in a number of instances, and we do not read of it again in the wilderness; and while it was sometimes overlooked during the apostasies of the Church, thanks be to God! the holy communion of the Lord's Supper has never ceased since its first institution to this

hour. On the mountain and in the glen, in dens and caves, in the retired and homely dwellings of the saints, as well as in churches and stately cathedrals, it has always, in some form, been celebrated. And it never will cease until he, its Author and Founder, comes again.

Verses 6-15.—Here is a difficulty. Certain men, supposed to be Michael and Elzaphan, who appear to have buried their cousins, Nadab and Abihu, about this time were ceremonially unclean; they were defiled by the body of a man. Now the defilement occasioned by contact with the dead lasted seven days. The consecration of Aaron and his sons began on the first day of the month. Nadab and Abihu could not have died until the eighth day; therefore it follows that on the *fourteenth* day they were still unclean. This is one of the numerous undesigned coincidences with which the Holy Scriptures abound.*

Are there not defilements which should keep men and women from the table of the Lord? Should we not be prepared to keep this feast? And should we not be thankful that there is a way provided by which we may come? The Israelite, if disqualified to come on the day, could come on the fourteenth day of the second month and partake of it. We need not wait so long. Dr. Chalmers gives an account of a man in Scotland who was not clear in his Christian experience, and morbid in his feelings. As the day for the Lord's Sup-

* Ellicott.

per drew nigh, he thought, "I can never go with God's people to enjoy it." On the morning of the holy Sabbath his doubts and fears still perplexed him. But while he was washing his hands, the Holy Spirit spoke to his soul, and said, "David, the blood of Christ can as easily wash away your sins as that water can make your hands clean." He saw the provision, embraced it, and went joyfully to the table of the Lord. We may have all our difficulties removed very early and speedily. The blood which was shed for us cleanseth us from *all* sin; and if there be a difficulty or dispute with any one, or if there be uncleanness, we may have all settled and removed by timely reconciliation, and timely purification in the blood. We cannot, however, help thinking that, as in the passover, so in the Lord's Supper, if any one carelessly neglect the Lord's command his wrath will be enkindled. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." On the part of the Jew the sentence was simply death, he was to be cut off from among his people; and on the part of the Christian, it is spiritual death. No man can neglect, or improperly observe, this holy sacrament with impunity.

Verses 15-23.—One of the most remarkable and beautiful things in the wilderness sojourn was *the pillar of fire and of cloud*. So it is often spoken of in the divine word. "Thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar

of fire, to give them light in the way they should go." Neh. ix, 12. Also that grand and magnificent passage in Isaiah, "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." ♦Isa. iv, 5. No sooner had Israel departed from Egypt, no sooner had his foes gathered for his destruction, than this cloudy, fiery pillar appeared. First, it was between Israel and Egypt; subsequently, it took its heavenward place, and appeared in a cloud by day and in fire by night. It seems not only nor always to have rested over the tabernacle, but overshadowed or lightened the whole encampment. It was the visible token of the divine presence and glory. It served a double purpose—it was a protection and a guide. They could not forecast or foretell its movements. It was always a mystery to them. How grateful and how refreshing must its shadow have been! Amid the burning sun and burning sands of the desert, it was always above them by day. And how refreshing and beautiful must its light of fire have shone by night over all the mountains and hills, the valleys and plains, and the rough and dangerous places where they were encamped! And what a terror it was to their enemies! It was also a defense as well as a glory. They did not dare to remain longer in a place than that cloud remained. When it moved, they moved; while it rested, they rested—"whether it was a day, . . . or two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tar-

ried," they abode in their tents and journeyed not; but when it was taken up they journeyed.

Is there any thing in the gospel dispensation to compensate for this? Yes, blessed be God! We are not left to our own will, or our own way. We have *the Bible* and *the Spirit of the Lord*. Hence the promises to us are: "I will guide thee with mine eye." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "Thou wilt be our guide even unto death." "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Thus, although no visible sign is in the heavens, no outward token of the divine presence, yet here, in the word of God, and by the counsels of his Spirit, we need not, we shall not, err. Not only is our every step watched by his guardian care, but guided by his unerring hand. Doubtless Israel often wondered why the cloud and fire went the way which they did; perhaps they often asked the question, "Why do they not indicate another route, or take another course? But it was the Spirit of the Lord present in the cloud which guided it, even as Isaiah says, "the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; and so didst thou lead thy people." Isa. lxiii, 14.

Is it not often so with us? We wonder why we are led here and not there; why we are called upon to endure such rough and thorny places when smoother and more peaceful ones are around us;

why we suffer so much, while our heavenly Father could take us up in his hands and carry us safely home. But we do not, we cannot, understand God's ways. He knows the best way to bring his people home; he sees the necessity for the rough and the difficult path over which we often travel with weary feet toward the city of God. But amid the oncoming day of celestial brightness we shall see that every path and every step were ordered just right, and that if we had taken the path which we desired, or if we had walked in the light and easy way we have often longed for, it would have led us downward, toward eternal ruin, instead of upward, toward the heaven which is our home. How much better for us all to say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
 However dark it be!
 Lead me by thine own hand;
 Choose out the path for me.

"I dare not choose my lot;
 I would not if I might;
 Choose thou for me, my God,
 So shall I walk aright."

SILVER TRUMPETS—ON THE MARCH— HOBAB.

Chapter x, Verses 1-11.—Perhaps there is none among the ceremonies of the Jewish people in which a greater interest has been felt than that of the *silver trumpets*. The trumpet is a very ancient instrument, and is frequently seen in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Its use was very frequent—in times of peace and in times of war, in times of feasts and in times of sacrifices. They were probably made very much like those in use at the present day. The original horn is *haz-ozerah*, and is different from that one which we translate cornet (*keren*, or *shophar*). The trumpet was straight; but the cornet was crooked. The trumpets on the triumphal arch of Titus at Rome and on the old Egyptian monuments were straight. These trumpets were not to be cast, but to be beaten. They were a cubit in length, the tube was narrow, a little thicker than that of a flute, and just wide enough to permit the performer to blow; while it terminated in the form of a bell. It was to be blown only by the priests. Being made of pure silver, doubtless their tones were very sweet and harmonious. They were to be used on two specific occasions, and especially for two specific purposes.

1. For the calling of the assembly. When their first notes were heard sounding through the assembly, then the people began to gather at the door of the tabernacle. If one trumpet only was blown, then only the princes came. All this was calm and quiet and peaceful. Paxton Hood has beautifully said: "Conceive such an evening as this in that beautiful land; it is the evening of the sixth day—our Friday; the sky is peaceful, it is the wilderness; among those crags are the foes of Israel's race. There is the tabernacle; there is the cloud about to yield to the fire—a star or two has already appeared; reverently awaiting and expecting, the laborers are reposing from their day of toil; the sun is setting; the darkness approaching. Hark! Hark! this is the peal of the silver trumpet over the waste, and the tool is dropped; instantly all labor ceases; and it is more, it is the commencement of the sabbatical year. Yonder Philistines may put their own interpretation upon it, and say, 'Their Sabbath is before;' but we can say, 'Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound.'"

2. The sounding of an alarm. The Hebrew word here used is *teruah*—alarm. This is supposed to denote a loud and continuous blast, by which the signal for the moving of the camps was distinguished from those which were used for the summoning of the congregation or princes.*

Henry supposes that it was a "broken, quavering, interrupted sound, which was proper to encourage

* Ellicott.

and excite the minds of the people in their marches against their enemies." There must have been, certainly, a very wide difference in the sounds, although we may not be able now, at this late period, to speak clearly of the distinguishment. Joel, the prophet, speaks of "blowing the trumpet in Zion, and sounding an alarm in my holy mountain." Thus both methods are referred to. This sound of alarm is, of course, in harmony with ancient warfare, although differing widely from our more modern method. Now it is the drum-beat, or the bugle-call, which arouses our modern soldiery to action, or calls them to their posts.

These silver trumpets beautifully illustrate the proclamation of the Gospel. They are only to be put to the lips of God's called and chosen ministers and messengers. The gospel trumpet is for invitation and for warning. It calls the people to come to Jesus; to come to the living waters. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Whosoever will, let him come." This is its first great purpose, to invite the world to come to Christ. But another is to *warn*. This is often overlooked. But there are times when the alarm must be sounded; when the forces of Zion are to be gathered together for the war; when every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ is to gird on his armor and prepare for the battle. Not only so, there is a time to warn and alarm the ungodly; to arouse their conscience; to stir up their guilty fears, and to make them dread an on-coming death and judgment and eternity.

This is the purpose of the silver trumpet of the Gospel. It can sound most melodiously and entrancingly; but there are times when it must sound so as to thrill and startle and alarm the sinner, and make him dread the death

“Which never, never dies.”

This is a use too seldom made of the silver trumpets. But no one can fail to see how God designed them, and how the Master has taught us to use them. “The gospel trumpet must at no time give an uncertain sound (1 Cor. xiv, 8), but must be used faithfully and diligently by the spiritual watchman, whether it be to warn the ungodly, to arouse the careless, or to speak to the hearts of God’s people.” *

Josephus tells us that Solomon made two hundred thousand trumpets, according to the command of Moses; and besides these there were stored in the temple treasury fifty thousand harps, psalteries, and other instruments. When the war against the Midianites occurred, Phineas, the son of Eleazar, had the trumpet of alarm in his hand. Abijah, when he went to war with Jeroboam, in his address to him said, “Judah has on his side the priests with the trumpets of alarm.” It seemed as if the presence of the priests with these trumpets was a token of the divine presence and the divine protection; for in the midst of the battle, when Judah was surrounded with his foes, they shouted, and

* Ellicott.

the priests sounded with the trumpets. "Then the Lord gave them a great deliverance." So while God's ministers are sounding these trumpets they have nothing to fear; they are assured of victory, for God is in the midst of them.

Verses 11-28. — *The march from Sinai.* It was but a little while before the trumpets sounded, and the cloud was lifted up from off the tabernacle of the testimony, indicating a removal from Sinai to some other place. What a stir there must have been in the camp! What a taking down of tents! What a packing of household goods and valuable things! But every thing was done orderly. First came the standard of Judah, and then, following in regular order, all the tribes, until not one of all was left. They were not now going into Canaan, only from wilderness to wilderness; from the wilderness of Sinai to the wilderness of Paran.

They had been in the wilderness of Sinai for a long time—for eleven months and nineteen days. Then the Lord said to them, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough." So they took their journey until the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. This comprised about one third of the whole peninsula of Sinai, being the east half of the limestone plateau constituting its center. At the north-east was the wilderness of Zin. The whole plateau is now known as El-Tih, that is, "the wandering." In Deuteronomy it is called "that great and terrible wilderness." It was bounded by the land of Canaan on the north, by the valley of the Arabah

on the east, and by the desert of Sinai on the south. Its western boundary appears to have been the wilderness of Shur, or, rather, the river or brook of Egypt (Wady-el-Arish) which divides the wilderness into two parts, of which the western part is sometimes known as the wilderness of Shur. The sojourn of the Israelites was confined to the eastern part.* Here we see the use which the Gershonites and Merarites had for their wagons. The Gershonites folded the hangings and curtains of the tabernacle and court, and carefully placed them in their two wagons; while the Merarites, with the boards and more bulky materials, employed their four wagons, going on with the first divisions of the camp that they might have time to erect the tabernacle before the Kohathites, "bearing the sanctuary," should reach the place of the encampment. So they set forward in the midst of the camps of Israel. Is it not even so with the Christian under the gospel dispensation? When he journeys, is it not from wilderness to wilderness in this world? The whole world is nothing to him but a wilderness. It is not his resting-place; it is not his home. Still, in the wilderness he has God with him. He has the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night; he has, even here, the living waters pouring from the smitten rock; and he has the living bread which comes down in abundance from heaven for his soul. He has the company, also, of all the good and pure and holy in Israel. Yet he is not

* Ellicott.

at home; he is on his journey, on his way to his heavenly home. The fact that he is in the wilderness argues inconvenience, danger, peril, pain, privation, and unrest. Often weary, often foot-sore, ready to faint and die, and yet he knows that each passing day brings him nearer home.

Verses 29-33.—*Hobab.* Happily for Israel, they not only had the pillar of cloud and of fire, but they also had Hobab with them; one of the sailors of the desert, who knew all its windings and wanderings, and was often to them “instead of eyes.” It is somewhat difficult to fix the relationship between Hobab and Moses. Some think he was his father-in-law, and others that he was his brother-in-law. Raguel is the same as Reuel. Exod. ii, 18. Reuel is supposed to be the same with Jether or Jethro in Exod. iv, 18; iii, 1. The original word is *hothen*, and is rendered father-in-law. This word and its cognate noun, *hathen*, is used to designate any near relation, as, for example, son-in-law, the sons-in-law of Lot; and so of brother-in-law. There are some, Ellicott says, who think that Hobab, whether identical with Jethro or not, was the son of Reuel, and that Zipporah, the wife of Moses, was the daughter of Hobab. But when it is remembered that Moses now was upward of eighty years of age, it is much more probable that he should seek the aid of a guide through the wilderness among those of the same generation with Zipporah than among those of a generation above her. Hobab, without doubt, was well acquainted with the

desert. He had always lived upon its borders. He knew the dangerous places and the more favorable places for encampment. His presence with them, Moses acknowledges, would be of immense value. Travelers tell us that it is wonderful how the eyes of these desert guides can penetrate into long distances. They have been well called "the sailors of the desert." Not only so, Moses was anxious that he should share in the rich blessings promised to his fathers, and which, he doubted not, should be inherited by his people. And he knew well, if he went with them, "that what goodness the Lord should do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." "We will do thee good: for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." Thus the advantage would be mutual, although the richer and larger would come to him. There is no doubt that Hobab was impressed by this urgent request, and consented to go with them; although when it was first mentioned to him he most positively declined, and said, "I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred." In Judg. i, 16, we read that the Kenites, descendants of Hobab, "went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, . . . and they went and dwelt among the people." Also Jael, who drove the tent-pin into the temples of Sisera, was of the same race. It seems that in the days of Saul they had gone to dwell with the Amalekites; for when Saul went to attack Amalek, he said unto the Kenites, "Go,

depart, and get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt." This is their history as furnished us in the book of God. How illustrative this of gospel teaching and preaching! And what an instructive lesson to the Church of Christ in all ages!

We, too, are journeying; but not to an unknown land, unheard of, and unpromised. No; we are journeying to heaven, the city of God. How desirous we should be that all our relatives and friends should accompany us to that beautiful land. We can offer them the highest inducements to go with us. The place to which we are going is of the most magnificent and glorious character. Its mansions and crowns, its harps and songs, its companionships and joys are supremely grand and blessed. No tongue can tell nor words describe their glory. And there is room enough there for all the world. All are cordially invited to go. No doubt can be entertained of the existence of that land to which we are journeying, or of our obtaining it if we make the appropriate effort. The Lord hath promised it. He has said, "I will give it to you." True, we are in the wilderness now; but this is only a temporary thing—only for a little while. Then will come the heavenly world, the everlasting home, the endless rest. Then there will be no more journeying, no more sorrow nor pain nor death. Not only can we promise infin-

ite, eternal blessings at the end of the journey; but richest blessings now and here. If you will go with us we will promise you the same living bread which comes down from heaven, and the same living waters; refreshing, reviving, soul-purifying waters, which flow from the cleft Rock of Ages. Thus the Church, as a whole, and its ministry and membership, are to keep uttering the cry, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." O if all were thus employed, what wonders should we see of converting and saving grace!

Verses 33-36.—The chapter closes with the beautiful form employed by Moses when the cloud rose and when it rested. With what confidence this mighty chieftain and lawgiver could say as he saw the ark of God set forward, borne on the shoulders of the Kohathites, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." But it is well worth our while to pause a moment here and consider the position of the ark as here referred to. "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them." And why was this? It was to "search out a resting-place for them." It is here presented to us as going *before* the people. So in other places. Whereas, in the general arrangement, it was in the center of the camp. It is also represented in Josh. iii, 3-11: "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over *before* you into Jordan." But we need not suppose that the ark always occupied the same place in their journeyings. Indeed, a

Jewish rabbi, Ibn Ezra, thinks that this three days' journey was different from all the other journeys in respect of the position of the ark. But God was in the ark and with the ark as well as in the cloud, and wherever the ark went there he was, "searching out a resting-place for them." And when that resting-place was found, then, when the ark rested in its place under the curtains of the tabernacle, how gladly he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Well does Bishop Wordsworth say, "The words, Return, O Lord, pre-announced the blessed time of rest and peace when God would abide with his Church on earth, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and will tabernacle forever with his people in heavenly rest and joy."*

* *Vide* Rev. vii, 15; xxi, 3.

T A B E R A H.

Chapter xi, Verses 1-4.—Murmuring is a characteristic of our race. No matter how many or how great are the blessings which we enjoy, still murmurs will arise; complainings and fault-findings will be heard. This is seen in all the journeys of Israel. They murmured against God, against Moses and Aaron, against the way in which they were going, against their food and drink, and, indeed, against every thing. This disposition is not only unworthy, but it is also exceedingly displeasing to God. So says verse 1: "It displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost part of the camp." The Lord changeth not. He is just the same now as he was in the former dispensation. His anger is enkindled now against all murmurers who despise his mercy and slight his grace. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured." These complainers were now in trouble. The fire of God's anger was burning fiercely all around them, and they hurried to Moses for relief. How blessed it is to have some one to run to, and to look up to, who has an interest at the throne of grace when we are in trouble

and distress. Moses, in answer to their request, prayed; and when he had prayed the fire was quenched. Some have thought this was the simoom, or fiery south wind, which sometimes blows in the Eastern desert, and which stifles those over whom it sweeps. But we do not think so. The text clearly declares it was *fire*. This was a common method of divine judgment in manifesting itself against sinners; and no doubt this was the element employed. Indeed, the meaning of the word *taberah* is a burning, showing the character of the visitation. But even in the midst of this burning there was mercy; for it was in the uttermost part of the camp, and came as a warning to them of God's disposition against them on account of their sin.

Verses 4-7.—*The mixed multitude.* There is no doubt that when God brought Israel forth out of the land of Egypt, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, very many among whom they had lived were drawn to go with them. Probably also, there were a number of Israelitish women who had married Egyptian husbands, and also Egyptian women who had married Israelites, so that there was a large company of them who, although called Israelites, were not, after all, of Israel. Many of their troubles on their journeys and in their camps were occasioned by them. They were a *vulgus promiscuum*—no doubt numerous—and perhaps ultimately they became “hewers of wood and drawers of water.” But yet, base and common though they were, they

influenced often the people of God, and led them away after their own evil example, and into their own debasing murmuring. How true this is often found to be at the present day! In nearly all our churches how numerous the murmurers are! And when their work is begun, how many are found to join them! Sometimes it is against the minister, sometimes against the Church, and sometimes against God and every thing that is good. They often occasion great trouble and distress, and many a minister's life has been worn out by them. Many churches have been divided, torn asunder by dissensions, or destroyed. They have become Taberahs—places of burning—and have been swept as by a fiery tempest.

What these complainers now wanted was *flesh—basar*—which also means fish. They immediately refer to fish when they say, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely." Classical writers and modern travelers agree in bearing testimony to the abundance of fish in the Nile and in the neighboring canals and reservoirs. Cucumbers also were of large size and of fine flavor. The water-melons were abundant, and seemed to quench their thirst in the heat of that land.* The word leeks is the same as is rendered grass for cattle in Psa. civ, 14, and is supposed to indicate a species of clover which is peculiar to Egypt, of which the young and fresh shoots were used as food, and said to be an excellent stomachic. The onions of

* *The Land and the Book*, p. 508.

Egypt are said to be the sweetest and best in the world. Even at this day, they are being grown in the greatest abundance, and are becoming an article of export to other lands.* These all were obtained freely, easily, with only the labor of catching the fish and of growing the vegetables and fruits.

But do we not see that they forgot what they paid for these things? They forgot just now about the brick-kilns, their task-masters, the voice of their oppressors, and the sting of their whips. Is it not even so in this gospel day? When men grow cold and indifferent to the Master's service, how they begin to long after worldly pleasures! How they long for the theater, the opera, the ball-room, the card-table, and the wine-glass! How weary they grow of divine things, and how they pall upon their taste! They are ready to say, "There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes." This manna! Yes, but it came down from heaven; it was God's rich gift to them. It had kept them alive in the desert, and, as Jewish writers say, "it was adapted to the taste of all." How beautiful it was. The color was "as the color of bdellium," and it was like coriander seed. The taste was like that of fresh oil, and all over the dew-covered camp, in the early morning of every week-day, the manna was found. Wonderful provision! It really cost them nothing but the labor of gathering it. This they ate freely and abundantly. "Man did eat angels' food." But it was

* Ellicott.

against this God-given manna that they murmured. No wonder that the Lord and his servant Moses were displeased. Now men murmur against the Gospel, which is the bread of heaven to hungry souls. They want something new, far-fetched; something that will tickle their fancy, please their imagination, and gratify their taste. A true gospel minister, in many places, is at a discount now. He is either too plain, or not sufficiently scientific, or does not use enough slang, or is too denunciatory. They would rather go on an excursion into the woods, or by the sea-shore, than to hear him. So many turn their backs upon the Church, the minister, and upon God, and go away after the vanities of this perishing world. What a wonder that we do not oftener feel the fire and hear the roar of the tempest as it sweeps on its destructive course. *Yet we do hear it.*

Verses 11-16. — *Moses's despair.* He really had forgotten his relations to this people, and spoke as if the whole burden of their support rested upon him. Yet he was only an instrument, an agent for the Lord. He certainly took too much upon himself when he inquired, "Whence should *I* have flesh to give to all this people?" No, Moses, you certainly cannot do it. But who has asked you, or commanded *you* to do this? God can do it; but you are only a poor helpless worm. And so he takes the usual course of discouraged and despairing men, and wishes that he might die. "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in

thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." How often this has been the experience of discouraged and troubled ministers! Discouraged by the clamors or fault-findings of their people, or by their want of success, like Moses and Elijah they have wished to die.

Verses 16-18.—*Help provided.* The burden of the administration of the tribes of Israel was certainly too great for one man. Therefore the Lord said unto Moses, "Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them." The number seventy is often used in the Scriptures. It is composed of the two sacred numbers—seven and ten—the former being the seal of the covenant, and the latter, probably, denoting perfection. It is not probable that any one of these had ever seen service before; all were, most likely, new men. This is thought by many to be the origin of the great Sanhedrin of the Jewish people. The Lord promised to "take of the Spirit which was upon Moses and give it to them." This was not that he should have less; but that they should partake of what he promised. Rashi compares the mode of bestowal with the manner in which the other lamps of the sanctuary were lighted at the golden candlestick, without diminishing the light from which theirs was taken. And not only so. These men, thus chosen, were to bear a large part of the burdens which were now pressing upon Moses, so that he might not be overweighted with care. Here we

find the real secret of church efficiency. Not that the minister or pastor should do *all* the work; but that he should associate with himself as many as he can, that they may help him bear the burdens which otherwise would crush him to the earth. Here, too, we see the great fault of many churches, where the minister is expected to do every thing. Any church which pursues this course will be sure to decline and die—to die for want of exercise, or for want of work. He is the most successful minister who best knows how to set his people to work with him, in the same spirit, and anointed and animated with the same holy desire.

Verses 18-21.—*Promise of abundance of flesh.* “Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh. . . . Not one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month.” The request which they made was sinful in its character. They should not have disappreciated the Lord’s provision for them. But now that he had determined to provide flesh for them, he would show them that “his hand had not waxed short;” they were to eat flesh until it came out at their nostrils, and became loathsome to them. He would show them that he could just as easily provide flesh as bread for them; but they found in the end that the provision which God had made for them was the best which he could have made. Is it not so with all merely sensual delights? “They cloy, but they do not satisfy.”*

* Henry.

All those sensual things of food or drink become nauseous to those who have lusted after them, so vain are they all. Not so, however, with spiritual comforts. The manna never nauseated the true Israelite. It was always sweet and pleasant to him. So are spiritual joys to spiritual people. They never cloy, they always satisfy the soul, and all its longings are for more.

Verses 21-23.—*The distrust of Moses.* How strangely sounds this talk of Moses. This man, who seems never before to have distrusted God, now utters the language of distrust. Lord, what is man? What a bundle of infirmities and inconsistencies! "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" He talks now as if God had not supplied them in the past. He limits the power of the Almighty. Ellicott says that the definite article is not used here, nor the possessive pronoun—merely the words flocks and herds, and so are not confined to those which had been brought out of Egypt. How near the encampment of Israel was now to the Ælanitic Gulf is not known. Perhaps near enough to suggest the gathering of all its fishes for their use. But when God makes a promise he knows how he will fulfill it. It was not with flocks, or with fish, or herds, but with the little quail, that all this longing was to be met and the sinful lust supplied. How often persons become weary of hearing the Gospel—of

feasting upon divine things. And especially is this so when grace is declining, and the soul is becoming dyspeptic, and the appetite is weak. Then their soul loatheth this light food, by which, they say, it is dried away. Not unfrequently they will leave the minister of a pure Gospel for a sensational preacher, or sensational sermons, and begin to long after those worldly pleasures which, sooner or later, will surely pall on their taste. How often do God's true followers need to hear this question, "Is the Lord's arm shortened?" They are often weak, often troubled and discouraged; their poor blind eyes do not see the light, and weakness and infirmity press upon them. But when they hear the Lord saying, "My arm is not shortened"—"thou shalt see now whether my word come to pass or not;" then their courage revives, and their faith becomes strengthened.

Verses 26-31.—*Eldad and Medad.* As soon as this instructive scene was passed, "the seventy men were gathered round about the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down, and took of the spirit which was upon Moses and put it upon them." Then they began to prophesy "and did not cease." We are to remember here that the word prophesy does not always mean to foresee, or foretell future events. It means frequently to exhort, to pray, to celebrate the praises of the Lord with the voice, or with instruments of music. But it is not prophecy unless it be done under the inspiration and energy of the Holy Spirit. This makes the heart warm;

this causes the words to bubble up like the boiling spring; and this gives ability to do the work of the Lord. It is under this power that Christians sing and pray and testify and preach. So the prophets foresaw and foretold future events. We do not know why Eldad and Medad did not come to the tabernacle. Henry thinks it was because they modestly declined preferment; but God forces it upon them. One thing is certain here—they are *named*, while the others were not. When, however, they begin to prophesy in the camp, it creates a real sensation. A very zealous young man ran and told Moses of the fact; and Joshua, regarding the whole matter as an unbearable irregularity says: "My lord Moses, forbid them." The motive which prompted Joshua in making this request appears to have been similar to that which led St. John to forbid the man to cast out devils—demons—because he did not follow with the apostles. Mark ix, 38, 39; Luke ix, 49, 50.* But as the man did not cast out demons in his own name, but in that of Christ, so in this case Eldad and Medad prophesied by the power of the Spirit which rested on them from above. There can be no doubt that this same spirit prevails largely in the exclusiveness of some of our Churches. The Baptist might cry out, of an unimmersed man partaking the communion with them, "Forbid him." The Episcopalian might say of another minister, who had not been ordained by a bishop of his Church, "Forbid him."

So it has been in the ages past; so it is still. Sometimes this has been said, and backed up by severe persecution. This same spirit shut up John Bunyan in prison, persecuted the Methodists, and shows its narrowness and exclusiveness all along the centuries. The cry has been against earnest men, but not in the *regular order*, "Forbid them." So Mr. Wesley himself hastened to London to forbid Maxfield from preaching. But his saintly mother said to him, "Be careful what you say to that young man; he is as much called of God to preach as you are." These instances are innumerable. A few years ago Rev. Mr. Tyng preached in a Methodist pulpit. Rev. Mr. Tubbs, rector in the same city, appealed to the bishop, "My lord Potter, forbid him." He was arraigned, tried, and reproved for so doing.

The answer of Moses was exceedingly timely and good—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." This prayer is needed now in the Church. For years gone by the Church, like Israel of old, has put all its work on the minister. Now the time has come when every member must feel, "I have a work to do." This work will differ in its character and form; but all are required to engage in doing something for the upbuilding of the Master's kingdom. The old, the young, the rich, the poor, the high, the low, the learned, the ignorant, all may become the Lord's prophets—all may do the

Lord's work. "Would God *all* the Lord's people were prophets!"

Verses 31-35.—*The quails have come.* They came thick and fast. They came till they covered the earth to the depth of two cubits. Then they were captured, killed, and dried in the sun for future use. Every man brought to his home ten omers, or between five and six bushels, according to the rabbins. This was the time of the migration of quails in vast flocks. From their weak power of flight they instinctively avail themselves of every island as a resting-place. Thus Malta and Capri, and other islands in the Mediterranean, are often covered in the spring-time. Their winters are spent in Central Africa, and, in coming back to Syria, they skirt the western side of the Red Sea, crossing its narrowest part. They are often so utterly wearied by the passage that, like the woodcocks of England, they may be taken in the hand. They fly also very low. Dr. Tristram says: "I have myself been fortunate enough to be a witness of this quail migration, both in African and Asiatic deserts. I have seen them in the morning covering many acres, where not one had been seen on the night before." But while "the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." No doubt in their greed for flesh they surfeited themselves, although God designed to plague them for their murmuring. Fearful was the plague, and fearful

was the name given to the place where the lust and the plague occurred — Kibroth-Hattaavah, that is, *the graves of lust*—"because there they buried the people that lusted." It is in like manner that God plagues the churches that forsake a pure Gospel for the unsound, but generally popular, teachings which some—professedly ministers of the Gospel—teach. They become disunited, disintegrated, divided, dead. Over the doors of many of them might be written, *Kibroth-Hattaavah*. "He gave them their request, *but sent leanness into their soul*."

MIRIAM AND MOSES.

Chapter xii, Verses 1-16.—Here is an insurrection. The probability is, that Zipporah, the first wife of Moses, was dead, and that he had married an Ethiopian, or Cushite woman. She may have come with them out of Egypt, or she may have been found dwelling in Arabia. The law did not prohibit such marriages—the prohibition was against the Canaanites. Some think otherwise of this transaction, and say the trouble was raised because of the supposed undue influence which was exerted on Moses by the family of Hobab in the government of Israel. But, if this were so, would we not have heard of it before this? The trouble evidently was about, “the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.” It can scarcely have reference to one whom he had married forty years before. The difficulty is with the Cushite; and against her Aaron and Miriam level their shafts. The fault charged against Moses is not mismanagement, but monopolization. They insinuate by the question asked, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?” that they were as much interested in the government as he was, and as much inspired. For “hath he not also spoken by us?” Indeed, did not Moses speak of the slowness of his speech? And did not the Lord ap-

point Aaron to be his spokesman? *Exod. iv, 16.* Then was not Miriam, also, recognized as a prophetess? *Exod. xv, 20.* Was it not strange that a sister and a brother should so seriously make these charges? Does it not show to us clearly how powerful and how malicious envy is? and that jealousy will burn like fire? There can be no doubt that Miriam was the leader in this matter, and she had by some means inveigled Aaron in with her. It may be Aaron was made a little sore-hearted by the appointment of the seventy elders, about which he had not been consulted. He was evidently, at times, a very weak man; and who is not? Even he, although the high-priest of the Lord, had many infirmities. How weak and frail poor human nature is! And even she who was a prophetess, and had sounded the "timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea," shows the greatest and grossest weakness. Lord, what is man? And, Lord, what is woman?

How many such scenes have been witnessed since then! * Surely every man, in every dispensation, who has been called to prominence in the service of the Lord has been similarly assailed. And how often has it been found that a "man's foes are those of his own household." It is very difficult for us to see even our dearest friends promoted, or preferred before us. How fearfully it rings out from this verse 2, "And the Lord heard it." It is not said that Moses himself took any notice of it. It was not proper, it was not necessary that he should do so. God was his refuge and

his defense; and he at once took up the cause of his injured servant. Blessed be God; in the midst of our greatest trials God appears for us. "The battle is" not ours, but "the Lord's." He keeps us "secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Verse 3.—*Moses the meekest man.* Here infidelity thinks it finds an argument against the authenticity of this book, or against its Mosaic authorship. As an infidel Jew once said to me, "Ah, Moses—that man who wrote his life after he was dead," referring to Deut. xxxiv, so infidels say—"No man could ever have written this word of himself." But let us not be too hasty in judging of this matter. Some have endeavored to solve this difficulty by saying that the compiler of this book, probably, inserted this here. And this is very probable, as in the case before-mentioned. This might have been done without any injury to the sacred text. But is this necessary? Did not the Son of God, the Saviour of men, say of himself, "I am meek, and lowly in heart?" Might not his greatest servant under the Old Testament dispensation say this of himself? If he had said it the words afford no ground of objection against the writer, or against the genuineness or authenticity of his writings, and least of all can they be justly objected to in the case of those who, like Moses and Paul, were ever ready to sacrifice their own personality in the great cause to which they had devoted their lives. Yet, again, the word *anav*, which is here translated

"meek," is frequently interchanged with the cognate word *ani*, and the meaning of that is "bowed down," or "oppressed." *

Verses 4-18.—*God's command.* "Come out ye three into the tabernacle of the congregation." What a moment was this! Here were the two guilty parties, and here was the meek, innocent man against whom the venom of their tongues had been cast. And above all was the almighty God! The words which he spake were few, but how mighty, how terrible, they were! He shows them the difference between his own servant Moses and an ordinary prophet. Moses was a prophet, but he was *more than a prophet*. He was God's servant in a high and extraordinary sense. To the prophet the Lord would make known his will in a vision, or dream; but with Moses it was not so; for with him God spoke "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches," that is, in riddles, or enigmas. He beheld "*the similitude of the Lord*." See now the honor which God puts upon him. "He is faithful in all mine house," he says; and Paul quotes these words in Heb. iii, 5. Such, therefore, being the relation of Moses unto me, "were ye not afraid to speak against my servant"—against Moses? (as in the original). God was very angry with them, so much so that "the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow." What a sight it must have been for Aaron to look upon his sister,

* Ellicott.

and "behold she was leprous." No wonder that he said to Moses, "Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned."

Two forms of judgment are here expressed: First, the cloud was withdrawn, and secondly, Miriam was a leper. This withdrawal of the cloud was very different from its being "lifted up" when they came to depart on their journeyings. When the cloud was *withdrawn* it was the token of the withdrawal of the divine presence and protection. And the leprosy, white as snow, which was in Miriam's face, Aaron could see it readily. He could not doubt that God had smitten her because of her foolishness and her sin. Then, too, the crushing thought was present with him that he was in this business, a participator in this sin, and, consequently, a sharer in its guilt. How humiliating was all this to him, as well as to her! To him came also the mortification which comes to the misdoer—he has at once to acknowledge the superiority of his brother, and to plead with him for deliverance from the penalties which were their due. Behold the goodness, the meekness of this great man! Unmoved by their envy and jealousy, he prayed, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee."

This plague came upon Miriam because she was the first in the sin. There was no penalty visibly inflicted upon Aaron; but doubtless for all the remainder of his life he felt the mortification of his

sin, in seeing the great mistake and the great foolishness which he had done.

Moses prayed that Miriam might not be as "*one dead*." The leper was as one dead in two respects: First, as being shut out from intercourse with his brethren; and secondly, as causing physical defilement to any one brought in contact with him. Archbishop Trench says: "Here was a dreadful parable of death; for there was, in severe cases, a dissolution, little by little, of the whole body, so that one limb after another decayed and fell away."

Verse 14.—*Spitting in the face.* "If her father had but spit in her face," etc. In the East this is regarded as the greatest indignity, and, indeed, in this country it is the same. The widow was to spit in the face of her late husband's brother, if he refused to marry her. Job says of his enemies, "They spare not to spit in my face." And they did spit in the Master's face. A person thus insulted would naturally seek for instant revenge, or would be, at least, greatly ashamed. A master whose slave has deeply offended him will not beat him, but spit in his face; or sometimes will order a servant to do it. School-masters also in Eastern countries, when displeased with a scholar, will spit in his face, or order some one else to do it. So Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days, because the Lord had been displeased with her.

Let me add. No one can fully estimate the displeasure of God against those who speak evil of his ministers, or of his own people. Many persons speak

evil of God's ministers, injure their influence, and ruin their reputation; and, alas! even some women are largely given to this. Miriam stands forth as a fearful representative of such people, and of the consequences of so doing. They should remember that God has said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." It has come within my own knowledge, and I might say, also, within my own experience, of persons, who, without any foundation for it, have spoken evil of God's ministers. I have watched them, and seen how the displeasure of God has been manifested against them. I have seen some of them, men of wealth and high social position, whose wealth has been seen to perish in a few short years, and who have been brought down into the dust; and others, who have held high positions in the Church and in the government, who have lost their positions, and been degraded in their character. Indeed, I am satisfied, after many years of careful observation, that no one can engage in this work without some marked visitation of the Lord's anger. He hears it all, he marks it all, and he will punish all who do it.

THE SPIES SEARCHING OUT THE LAND.

Chapter xiii, Verses 1-26.—"Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan." They had now come so near the land that there was a desire to know more about it. So the Lord gave the command, which was cheerfully responded to by Moses and all the people. Deut. i, 22. There can be no doubt that the plan originated with the Lord. Moses would not have engaged in such an enterprise without the Lord's approval, and, acting thus, the people acted with him. We cannot think from the history of the affair that the Lord was displeased with them for it. There is no evidence whatever of this. His displeasure was on account of the *report* which the majority brought back, and the murmurings of the people when they heard it. There can be no doubt that they might have gone up easily at that time if their unbelief had not prevented them. Rameses II. had overrun the land, and had carried away an immense amount of plunder, in gold, silver, and precious things. Indeed, he had well-nigh wasted them. Their defenses were weakened, their spirit was broken, and with a million of armed men—rude as their arms were—they might easily have captured it all. But this was not to be so now.

Twelve men were selected, rulers among the people, yet not having the same names as appear among the tribal names of the census. It is really wonderful that only *two* names of the twelve have come down to us with honor—*Caleb* and *Joshua*. It may be a matter of interest to know the meaning of their names. Shammua signifies “a minor;” Shaphat, “a judge;” Caleb, “a dog” (what a watchful and faithful one was he!) Igal, “God will avenge;” Oshoa, or Joshua, “God will save;” Palti, “deliverance of Jehovah;” Gaddiel, “fortune of God;” Gaddi, “fortunate;” Ammiel, “kindred of God;” Sethur, “a covert;” Nahbi, “hidden;” Geuel, “the majesty of God.” From their high character and relations it would seem to us that they were wisely chosen. They must have known well the language of Canaan, and also have been expert in concealing their designs. Had the Canaanites suspected their designs, or known that they were spies from an enemy’s camp upon their borders, it is not probable that they would have escaped alive. Probably, they went about in twos and threes, and in different directions, so as to compass the land in the briefest time. Their general appearance must have been similar; there could have been nothing to suggest that they were foreigners. It was the season of vintage and fruitage, says Kitto. They saw that it was really a land “flowing with milk and honey.” They saw the beauty of its vales and hills; but they saw also the giants, and were awfully afraid of them. They saw the luscious fruits of grapes and figs and pome-

granates. In the South country they saw the Negeb, by which name this region was known. It formed the transition from the desert to the now highly cultivated lands, and was more fitted for grazing than for agricultural purposes. It was in the vale of Eshcol, near Hebron, that they saw a remarkable cluster of grapes. This they cut, and bore it upon a pole to the camp. Some persons have smiled at the idea of such a cluster of grapes. But this is because they do not know how grapes grow in this region. Ritter says that the grapes of Hebron have a great reputation throughout Palestine. Many travelers estimate the weight of the largest clusters produced in Palestine at from ten to twelve pounds. Kitto mentions the fact of a Syrian vine at Welbeck, the seat of the Duke of Portland. A bunch of grapes was sent from this vine, in 1819, as a present to the marquis of Rockingham, which weighed *nineteen* pounds. It was conveyed to its destination, more than twenty miles distant, on a staff by four laborers, two by two in rotation. The greatest diameter of this Welbeck cluster was nineteen inches and a half, its circumference four feet and a half, and its length nearly twenty three inches. Thus in our modern times a great illustration was given of the size of these clusters and of the method of their transportation. The pomegranates and figs were probably carried on the small staff. The words may be rendered thus: "And they bore it between two upon a staff; also some of the figs and

promegranates." * These were probably the last vines which they saw, and they were the nearest to their encampment.

So all Israel saw and tasted the luscious fruits of the promised land. True, they were only samples; but how beautiful and how rich they were! God's people in this day have foretastes of the heavenly country and their eternal home. The seasons of sweet communion with God, of fellowship with his people, are blessed, because they indicate what that heavenly home will be when they reach it.

" The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets ;
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golen streets."

The evil report. When they returned, they told Moses that they had been through the land, and "surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." But they added, "The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: the Anakim are there; and the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites." Then a murmur arose among the people, and Caleb and Joshua stilled the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Then the majority answered more formally, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. . . . The land . . . eateth up the inhabitants thereof." This was probably said because

* Ellicott.

of the strife and discord which prevailed among the various tribes who contended for its possession.* Then they saw those dreadful giants, in whose presence they were "as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." This was the majority report—a report which indicates unbelief, faithlessness, cowardice, and timidity. What if the people were strong; was not the Lord God of their fathers Almighty? What if the cities were walled up to heaven; could not God bring them down, even with the blast of rams' horns? What were the giants, dwelling in the mountains, if God was with them? Forty years after this, in a few days they were all conquered. So Caleb says now, "Let us go up at once and *possess* it [not *conquer* it] for God will do that for us."

What an illustration this of unbelief. Men know now of the goodly land—the land of holiness and perfect love. And when they see it, or hear of it, they cry, It is a goodly land—a land of milk and honey; but we cannot go up and dwell there. There are so many difficulties in the way; so many giants to be overcome. It is because of this that many live on in the wilderness of doubts and fears, and many die there, and never reach this promised land. Had they been true to God, how soon they would have been in this land! But by their unbelief they are caused to wander many years in the desert land. In three short months they might have marched from Egypt into Canaan, but it took

* Ellicott.

them *forty years* to reach it. O, if we look at the membership of our churches, and see their unbelief, we shall not wonder that so many are weak and sickly, faint and dying! Why do they not obey the divine command, and go up at once and possess the goodly land? No doubt can exist as to its beauty and desirableness; but the majority still fear the giants. Well does Wesley sing:

"O that I might at once go up ;
No more on this side Jordan stop,
But now the land possess ;
This moment end my legal years,
Sorrows and sins and doubts and fears,
A howling wilderness."

M U R M U R I N G S .

Chapter xiv, Verses 1-11.—A murmuring spirit is always an unbelieving and unhappy one. So it was now. The people not only murmured against Aaron and Moses, but they murmured against God. It was an open and defiant rebellion against heaven. Hear what they say: "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" This was fearful, especially after all the great goodness which the Lord had shown to them. Then they wished they had died, and they proposed to make for themselves a captain and return to Egypt. They were now so near the Amorites and the Anakim that they apprehended nothing less than that they would come out and destroy them. How unwise and foolish were these unbelieving clamors! But for all this the majority report of the spies was largely accountable. It would seem as if that report had been rendered with the design of intimidating them. Suppose that what they say was all true—what then? Did not the Lord open the waters of the Red Sea to make them a way? Did he not destroy Egypt to deliver them? Had he not fed them with manna from heaven, and given them water to drink from the flinty

rock? You will observe that neither Caleb nor Joshua *deny* their report; they only add that, if it is all true what they say, still "we are able to go up and possess the land." Moses himself acknowledged, nearly forty years after this, when they were about to enter into the land, "Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, a people great and tall, the children of the Anakim." Deut. ix, 1, 2. At this time they believe they can enter in; but at the period now under consideration they believed they *could not* enter in. Indeed, when Caleb and Joshua attempted to interfere to calm their wild excitement, the princes, the elders of the people, as their representatives, "bade stone them with stones." What a scene would have been enacted if God had not at once appeared! Stoning was a mode of death commonly employed in Egypt. So under the Jewish law this method was adopted in all the ages of their history. It was the punishment for adultery, idolatry, witchcraft, Sabbath-breaking, and blasphemy. So David was threatened by his men centuries after, in the case of the destruction of Ziklag; and so the angel-faced Stephen was put to death by his enemies shortly after his Lord and Master had ascended to heaven. And, if Christ had been put to death under the Jewish law, this would have been its mode; but crucifixion was the Roman mode of punishment.

Yes, they murmured seriously and aggravatedly,

and so have we. Dispensations do not change men, nor human hearts. Multitudes live this day in murmuring and grumbling streets, and often they speak even against the Lord. They certainly often speak against his ministers, and not unfrequently against himself. There are many now who wish to die because of adverse providences, and many put an end to their own earthly existence. Many would, and, alas! many *do* retire from his service and become worldly and cold and dead. Again, there are those who refuse to march up to their privilege in the Gospel. Before their eyes is spread out the Canaan of perfect love, smiling in its beauty, flowing with milk and honey:

“A land of corn and wine and oil,
Favored with God’s peculiar smile,
With every blessing blest.”

But they will not go up and possess it. They have fears about their reputation and about their standing in their temporal interests. And so they listen to others when they say, “You can’t go up and possess this land.” Your temper or your trade, your family or your surroundings in life—your official board or your church—are in your way—and if you go against them you will suffer. And so they go back into the desert-land, and are hindered from enjoying the rich blessings which the Lord has provided for them. O how many thousands are in these environments to-day! If they would only listen to the voice of the Lord, and regard the truth of his promises, and the might

and power of his arm! But the time is coming on when the whole Church will go up and possess this goodly land, and dwell in it forever.

Just now, however, the doubters and unbelievers prevail. Atheism, pantheism, materialism, latitudinarianism and credophobia, all are ranged in battle against the truth; and to these may be added, Phariseeism and worldliness. As good old John Bunyan has well said: "Ten thousand doubters, and fifteen thousand bloodmen; and old Incredulity was again made general of the army." But the triumph and the victory will come, and God will be glorified by his victorious hosts as they take possession of this Canaan-land.

Look now! The cloud has suddenly appeared over the tabernacle! Hark now! The voice of God is speaking, and he is speaking in wrath. "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." This is the time for Moses to plead with God. And he bases his plea on the honor and glory of the Lord. The "Egyptians knew what the Lord had already done for them; and they would tell it to the inhabitants of the land of Canaan that the Lord is in the midst of them, and is seen face to face, and his cloud standeth over them, and that he goes before them. And now, if this people are all slain, then it will be reported that thou art not

able to bring this people into the land which thou hast sworn to give them." O what a plea was this! Still further he pleads, "The power and the mercy of the Lord are great, and thou hast forgiven the people from Egypt until now!" The prayer prevailed—the pardon was bestowed so far as to prevent their extermination—but judgments were also announced which were to continue until nearly forty years had passed; until they who had seen his glory in Egypt, and the miracles which he wrought, and his wonders in the wilderness, should be destroyed, and their children should come into the possession of the land. Only two exceptions are mentioned in this decree; namely, Caleb, who alone is spoken of here, and Joshua, who in all other places is announced with him, hereafter. Besides them, also, were the Levites, and all under twenty years of age. So the pardon prevented the destruction; and while millions would fall in the wilderness, millions more would be prepared, ultimately, to enter Canaan.

Thus, while judgments are announced, they are mingled with mercy. Besides this, these forty years spent in the wilderness would harden them, soldierize them, and make them ready for the rapid conquest of the land when the time for their return into it should come. Perhaps they never would have conquered the land so quickly had they not been thus disciplined. So the Lord "makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains the remainder of wrath."

We cannot tell *why* the Lord has permitted such multitudes of his people by unbelief to come short of this Canaan-land. It is, certainly, a mystery that the eyes of these multitudes should seem to be holden from seeing the light of such heavenly provisions and assurances. While the number within the past century has been constantly growing of those who dwell, in a spiritual sense, in this holy land, and while the light is daily spreading, the very large proportion of the people of the Lord *do not enter in*. But the time will come when this premillennial experience will be universal, and the whole Church will rise up to enter in and possess this goodly land. The Lord hasten it in his time. Amen.

Verses 25-36.—*The sad return to the wilderness.* It was a pity when they had come so near to Canaan—right on its borders—that their unbelief should drive them back again into the wilderness, but so it was. How long was the period ordained for these wanderings! The largest part of forty years was thus consumed. We must remember that this period was reckoned from the exodus, and not from the return of the spies to Kadesh. The numbering which is recorded in chapter xxvi of this book took place after the death of Aaron, which occurred on the first day of the fifth month of the fiftieth year after the exodus. Hence it follows that the year and a half which had elapsed since the exodus must be included in the forty years of shepherd life in the wilderness.* This would make thirty-eight

* Ellicott.

years and a half of farther wanderings. And what years they were ! Years of murmuring, plague, and death. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Each day of the searching of the land was to be the period of a year for their suffering of these things. In like manner God's judgments are poured forth upon the unbelieving and the disobedient. They could have gone in at the time when Caleb and Joshua made their good report had they believingly accepted it ; but they rejected their report, threatened to stone them, and acted wholly upon the report of the majority of the spies. How well Paul uses this in Heb. iv, 1-6: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." To us the Gospel of a rest—a rest from sin and unbelief—is preached. How does this affect us ? Do we believe it ? Or do we, like Israel, disbelieve and disobey ? Shall we allow this word of promise to be declared unto us and we not believe it ? And how can we expect, if we disbelieve it, that we shall be dealt with any differently from the way in which Israel was treated ? Did not God swear in his wrath that they should not enter in ? And shall we not be excluded if we do as they did ? It certainly remaineth for some to enter in, and shall we be like the multitude who enter not in because of unbelief ; or shall we be like Caleb and Joshua, following the Lord fully, and believing his promise, and his oath ? How much in our religious life will depend upon the answer which we give to these questions !

Verses 36-38.—*The judgment on the men who brought the evil report.* “They died by the plague before the Lord.” The word *maggephah*, which is here rendered plague, denotes “a stroke.” The same word is used in Exod. ix, 14, of the ten plagues of Egypt. It is used also in Num. xvi, 48, 49, after the insurrection of Korah; in chap. xxv, 9, after the Israelites had joined in the lascivious and idolatrous rites of the Moabites and Midianites. Sometimes it is used of destruction by the sword, as in 1 Sam. iv, 17; 2 Sam. xvii, 9, and xviii, 7. No doubt it was a sudden and overwhelming visitation which fell upon them all, and left no doubt upon the Israelites as to the falsity of their conclusions about what they had seen. Their sin was a double one: first, they sinned by bringing such a report; and secondly, they caused Israel to sin. If they had died the ordinary death of men, there might have been many who would have thought and said, “After all, they were about right.” But now, when they were so suddenly and so fearfully stricken, no doubt could be entertained.

Verses 39-45.—*Their murmuring and their presumption.* They certainly had occasion to mourn. The decree of Jehovah that they all, who were adults, must die in the wilderness, and that only their children were subsequently to enter into the land of Canaan, was sufficient to produce intense sorrow. But why did they mourn? Was it in sorrow for their sins, or because of their punishment? There can be no doubt that it was the latter reason.

They "found no place for repentance, though they sought it earnestly with tears." How much better it is always to believe God than to give way to our doubts, or listen to our fears or our unbelief. And yet multitudes give themselves up in this day to lives of mourning and sorrow, yea, even to an eternity of woe, by just listening to these things rather than to God. When shall we learn how much better it is to believe and obey God than to regard the voice of Satan, or of unbelief! Unbelieving always begets presumption. "But they *presumed* to go up unto the hill top." This was nothing but presumption. God had given them no command to go up. He had not promised them his presence. Yea, they were assured that he would not go up with them; and yet, after all, they essayed to go up. But they only went up to their discomfiture, and the destruction of many lives. The Amalekites were there before them. Perhaps they were there lying in wait for them in the valley, to attack them if they came that way, and had learned of their designed attempt to try the mountain route, and had gone to meet them there. So it befell them as the Lord had declared to them. Already the decree began to be fulfilled—their carcasses were already beginning to fall in the wilderness. When men turn away from the Lord, the Lord turns away from them. If God is not with us we had better never undertake to move forward. And for any one to try presumptuously to go forward when God is against him is the boldest and most daring thing to

do, and must result in fearful manifestations of the divine displeasure against him. Israel, engaged in this presumptuous march, was smitten and discouraged, and driven back even unto Hormah. "Here the definite article is employed—*the* Hormah. If the Hormah which is here mentioned is identical with the Hormah of chap. xxi, 3, where the definite article is not employed, and with the Hormah of Judg. i, 17, we must conclude that the name is used proleptically, as is not unfrequently the case in the Scriptures. It is probable, however, that in each case a different place is denoted by a common name." * There is much force in this name. Hormah means destruction. And no doubt many were slain in the retreat, and thus the judgment of God was rendered against them. Is not this significant of the destruction which awaits the unbelieving? Is it not said that "he that believeth not shall be damned?" Is it not said that those who obey not the gospel "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?" And again, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sin; and if ye die in your sins, where I am ye cannot come." So that the *Hormah* to which Israel was driven may be only too apt an illustration of the *hell* to which the sinner will be driven by the wrath of God. It is indeed "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He will not suffer his promises to be disbelieved with impunity, nor his commands to be disobeyed.

* Ellicott.

SINS OF IGNORANCE AND OF PRESUMPTION.

Chapter xv, Verses 1-14.—"It must be remembered that when the Lord gave his law on Mt. Sinai it was that it might be observed in Canaan. They had not as yet incurred the sentence of exclusion, and they *might*—and if they had not been disobedient they *would*—have been in Canaan within a fortnight of its delivery."* But they murmured against God in Kadesh, and were excluded. Why did they not enter in? Why was this exclusion? It was not by the decree of God simply that they suffered this. It was by their own voluntary unbelief. They forfeited the privileges of obedience. There is no evidence that they ever kept more than one passover, or that they practiced circumcision in the wilderness. They were a doomed generation, under the ban of God's displeasure. Before they ultimately took possession of the land of promise they were circumcised and allowed to keep the passover only after they had conquered it.

Is it not so in the gospel dispensation? No man is absolutely excluded from heaven simply by a di-

vine decree. If any man suffer this doom it is because of his own sin and unbelief. No man is condemned of God until he has condemned himself. No man is damned, only as he damns himself. Man's eternal condition is made dependent on man's voluntary action.

Verses 14-16.—*Kindness to strangers.* The whole Mosaic dispensation recognized the equal rights and privileges of the stranger sojourning with them. One ordinance was for both; for the children of Israel and the stranger. Thus the Lord showed kindness to the strangers under the law. They were not to be slighted, neglected, or despised. Was not this indicative that the time would come when strangers would be strangers no more? So Paul says to the Gentiles: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Eph. ii, 19, 20.

Under this dispensation strangers are not to be slighted or neglected. They are to be recognized among us, invited to partake of our religious privileges and blessings, and to partake of the common salvation upon the same conditions with ourselves. The partition wall is now broken down—one sacrifice has provisionally reconciled all nations to God, without any observance of these merely legal ceremonies. What a blessed Gospel, which offers pardon, life, and peace and salvation to all!

Verses 24-31.—*Sins of ignorance and presumption.* This law was for the nation and the individual. It was possible for both to sin in this way. The word *shegagah* is used to denote transgressions unwittingly committed, in contrast to sins committed presumptuously. This has special reference to sins of omission. For actual sins provision had already been made (Lev. iv, 2), but not for such sins. When there was an awakening on account of them, when they were laid upon the conscience, when in their consciousness they knew that they had done wrong, then atonement was to be made. We are too often forgetful of the fact that sins may thus be committed. We too seldom pray, for sins of omission and ignorance, that they may be forgiven. And yet how numerous they are! Sometimes we regard them as mistakes, as inadvertencies, as forgetfulness, but they are yet offenses in the sight of God, and need the atoning blood of Christ. They needed blood under the law, and so they need blood now for their forgiveness and our purification.

But for sins of *presumption* there was no such provision. The soul which thus sinned was to be cut off from among his people, "because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment." Ver. 31. This was a terrible doom. It was in view of the offensiveness of these sins, and of the fearful punishment due the transgressor, that the Psalmist prayed, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have

dominion over me." Psa. xix, 13. But the case of such sinners is different under the gospel dispensation. The soul now sinning presumptuously, if he will repent of his sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, may be forgiven, justified, and saved. But if he perseveres in such sins, and remains impenitent, there is no forgiveness for him, neither in this world nor the world to come. It is written in the gospel: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"—sins of presumption as well as sins of ignorance. But even the blood of Christ cannot cleanse away presumptuous sins from an impenitent and unbelieving soul.

Verses 32-37.—*The Sanctity of the Sabbath.* This at first sight would seem to indicate that the Mosiac law was vindictive and cruel. But further investigation will show that this view is not correct. There is nothing in God's law dearer to him than that which relates to his Sabbath. We must remember that he commanded us to keep this day *holy*. He had already commanded the Jewish people to kindle no fire on that day. So this man sinned presumptuously. It may be, as Ellicott says, that this incident which is here recorded is designed to illustrate the presumptuous sins which were to be punished with death. We cannot tell exactly the time when this sin was committed—whether in the wilderness of Sinai, or at Kadesh. Nor does this matter. The observance of the Sabbath was recognized in the wilderness as well as in Canaan. It is the law of God for all the race; for

all ages, and for all men. The mode of punishment for this sin was not revealed until now. It was the ordinary method of stoning. Many in their derision of this law have laughed at this case; but it is indicative of God's purpose against all such transgressors. No one can possibly violate this law and avoid punishment. No nation or people can do this with impunity. After this Israel suffered seventy long years of captivity for this sin, prominently among other causes. This should serve as a warning to men now. It is truly lamentable to see how this law is *now* violated by railroad and steamboat corporations, by many manufacturers and business men, by pleasure-seekers, by saloon-keepers, and even by some professed Christians. Men are *compelled* to work on trains and boats, in factories and shops. Pleasure-seekers spend the whole day in rioting and mirth, and saloon-keepers have their places open day and night, dealing out death and damnation to the people in their horrid traffic. And, alas! professing Christians in visiting, in feasting, in worldly amusements, in reading Sunday newspapers, and riding out for pleasure on the Lord's day. All these things are violations of the law of God. This law was not given to the Jew only, but given to us, and given to all men. No one can conceive how much the wrath of God is enkindled against us for these things. And the time is not distant when, unless we repent, his judgments will be poured out upon us in a most fearful manner. Is it not so even now? What mean the cyclones

and tornadoes, these storms and floods, these ravages of fire and flood, this alarming prevalence of the pestilence? Has not God already begun to punish us? And what will the end be?

Verses 37-41.—A *preventive* against *sins* of *ignorance* and *presumption*. This was to be in the fringes and ribbons of their garments. These were to be remembrances to them of their duty, and warnings against their sins. It is said the word *fringes* is better rendered tassels on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the tassel of the corner a thread or cord of blue. The outward garment of the Jew was a four-cornered cloth. There was a hole in the center through which his head was put, so that the one half covered the front and the other the back of the body.* They were not the phylacteries mentioned by the Saviour. They were their own invention; but the fringes, or tassels, were a divine institution. As a Jew, Christ wore them. Hence we read of the woman with the issue of blood who desired to touch the border, or *kraspedou*, of the Saviour's garment. These tassels were not to be made use of for the adornment of their garments, to feed their vanity and pride, but to "stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance."

They were a peculiar people, and their obligations and responsibilities were peculiar. This they were never to forget. These fringes were to

be a constant reminder to them. It is well to have these reminders, to put them, if not on our garments, upon our walls, over our beds, in our parlors and dining-rooms—to have them, as it were, written on the palms of our hands, and as frontlets before our eyes. We have what Israel had not: the word of God printed in our own tongue wherein we were born. This is in all our dwellings, and all its truths are within our easy and our constant reach. We may know them, and happy is he who remembers and keeps them.

It is wonderful to notice what pains God has taken in all these arrangements that we might always “remember and do all his commandments, and be holy unto our God.” This is his great design in all his dispensations: to make people holy. All his government tends to righteousness. Holiness is the great end of all. Any thing else is unworthy, undeserving of consideration. But this is man’s highest motive; this the loftiest goal to which he can aspire. Nothing is more pleasing to God—nothing is more for man’s present and eternal well-being. O that at every moment we could see and feel this! Then what lives we should live—what examples we should set, and what influence we should exert. O Lord our God, prosper thou this always and every-where! Amen.

KORAH AND HIS SIN.

Chapter xvi, Verses 1-36.—This was a most alarming outbreak. It was not, as on so many former occasions, a rebellion of the “mixed multitude,” but it was a rebellion of princes, largely representing the whole, or, at least, a good part, of the congregation. There were “two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown.”

This, perhaps, is the only event of any real interest occurring in their wanderings in the desert. Of this rebellion, Korah was the leader. And, what made it more trying to Moses, he was his own cousin-german; they were brothers' children. Truly “a man's foes are often those of his own household.” It is impossible for us to tell exactly the time and place of its occurrence. Probably it was during one of the early years of their wanderings in the wilderness. Two causes are alleged for this rebellion. The one is, that Korah aspired to a high place in the priesthood; and the other, that Reuben aspired to be the head of the tribes of Israel, as the first-born, in place of Judah. It is a singular fact that the Kohathites and Reubenites encamped on the south side of the tabernacle. It was this, probably, that made them alike in their rebellious ac-

tions, while a twofold purpose may have controlled them. Dathan and Abiram were chief men in the tribe of Reuben. Thus the two parties, Levitical and tribal, were conjoined. Ambition and jealousy were the two passions which impelled them; and, acting under their power, the rebellion assumed a threatening aspect. So it has ever been in the history of the Church and the world. The greatest of their difficulties, errors, skepticisms, rebellions, and false assumptions have come from their great men. Their position has not only magnified their crime, but, also, greatly augmented its force. It is the spirit of the evil one, who aspired to be equal with God's own Son, which occasions these troubles and produces these discontents in all the ages. First of all, they brood in the mind and heart; then they are spoken of to others—men of the same spirit—and, finally, the flame breaks forth. So it broke forth now.

The Outbreak. They acted unitedly. They were gathered together with one accord. And when thus gathered they strike against Moses and Aaron. They accuse them of unlawful and unauthorized domination. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing *all* the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them." They virtually ask them to resign their high positions to which God had appointed them. The claim is, that Moses and Aaron are no better than multitudes in the congregation, and that their exaltation was of themselves, and not of the Lord. How strangely

blinded men often are! Did they not know that *God* had called and appointed them? Did they not know that their leadership, in the priesthood and in the government, was of a divine authority and under divine direction? If they did know it, it had no weight whatever with them. Ambition flaunted her banner before their eyes, and they willingly followed her, even with a lie in their mouth.

But unfounded and unjust as their charges were, Moses was evidently dismayed at the magnitude of the affair, "and fell down upon his face." He did not act or speak hastily. He sought counsel from God by prayer, while at the same time he showed them how willingly he would resign his position if this were the divine will. After this he was prepared with his answer, which, doubtless, God had given to him. "To-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him." The whole matter is referred back to God, with entire confidence that he will do what is right, and that he only could decide it; and the answer was to be given to them speedily. In all such difficulties, it is wise to gain time. This gives an opportunity for reflection, for counsel, and, also, for deceived and half-hearted persons to escape the consequences which shall fall upon the guilty parties. For instance, in the recent war of the rebellion in our own country, if the masses of the Southern people could have had time to deliberate

they would never have entered into it. But their wily leaders rushed many innocent persons, without mature thought, into this dreadful struggle. But in the instance before us there was a little time for reflection. This gave time for some of the sons of Korah to escape the threatened judgment, as it is evident that they were spared (*vide* chap. xxvi, 11; 1 Chron. vi, 22-38), and also the titles of a number of Psalms.

The Preparation for the Trial. Moses gives direction to them as to what they should do. They were to take their censers, which, most likely, they had made for themselves, they were to put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord. You will mark, this was the peculiar prerogatives and the holiest function of the priesthood. No one else was allowed to do this, by divine authority, but the priests. And their putting incense in their censers was simply allowed them for a test, or for the purpose of making a test case. How withering the closing words of Moses's address to them are! "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." They had assumed prerogatives which did not belong to them, and now they were to answer for their folly and their ambition. God would show them who was holy, and who was not, in his sight. What a warning to all such men in all times to come!

The Trial and its Events. It is now the time and the turn of Moses to speak. "And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: seemeth

it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?" Vers. 8, 9. They had really forgotten how God had already exalted them in separating them from the congregation of Israel to bring them near to him, and minister before him. This was the talk of Moses to Korah. And now he sends for Dathan and Abiram, but they in their pride and rebellion refuse to come, adding most insulting words, and intimating that Moses and Aaron were largely responsible for their protracted sojourn in the wilderness. They virtually charge Moses with an attempt to "put out the eyes of the people," and say, "We will not come up." This kindled the wrath of Moses, and he answered to the Lord, "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." Ver. 15. All these charges of wrongdoing, of evil designs upon their liberties and their lives, and of deceiving them were not made against him, but against God who had especially appointed him to his high and perplexing position. He was thus fully able to answer all their charges of unjust domination, and to say, "One poor ass I have not taken from them, neither have I hurt one of them." Financially, he would have been better off as a herdsman than he was as king in Jeshurun.

But the insurrection was evidently deeply planned and wide-spread. The people were largely

with them, and Moses had just cause for alarm. Heroic treatment was necessary, and he knew God was with him, and he would quickly and effectually settle this business. The crisis was now reached, and the end was rapidly approaching. Korah and his company were summoned to appear before the Lord on the morrow, with the censers which they had used, even two hundred and fifty of them, and to put incense in them. Moses and Aaron were also commanded to take each his censer. What a wonder that Korah did not understand that the Lord was not with him! But so it is. Sin, ambition, pride, blind the mind and heart, and harden them against the clearest light and the clearest evidence. No boldness, no impudence, is too great for such persons. So, on they came, every man with his censer. Ellicott supposes they may have been household vessels, resembling censers; or vessels used by the heads of houses, as priests, before the order of priesthood was restricted to the family of Aaron; or that they may have been made by Korah and his company for their own use. It is to be observed here that Korah had gathered all the congregation against Moses and Aaron to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. How little he thought, amid his expectations of carrying out his plans, that God had permitted them to be gathered together there for the purpose of witnessing his own discomfiture and destruction when the vengeance of the Lord was poured forth! But so it was. They came to see

his triumph, but they saw instead his debasement. The cry went forth from the mouth of the Lord, through Moses to the congregation, "Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram;" and, again, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." Some have thought that the tabernacle spoken of in the twenty-fourth and twenty-seventh verses refers to a rival tabernacle erected by Korah. But my own impression is that it refers simply and specifically to their dwelling-place, as the word "tents" in the twenty-sixth verse. Here is the test. Moses said, "If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing [create a new creature], and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." This was a clear test. There could be no deception, nor misunderstanding of it. And so in an instant, quick as the lightning flash, without any further warning, "the ground clave asunder, . . . the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods." It was a terrific visitation; it has filled the world with awe and wonder ever since its occurrence. But this was the punishment of Dathan and Abiram; it is evi-

dent that another punishment was allotted to Korah. There can be little doubt that Korah and his company of two hundred and fifty men with him, from among the Levites, first perished by fire. This seems evident from verse 26, "Lest ye be consumed in all their sins;" and in verse 21, "That I may consume them in a moment." But in the midst of wrath there was mercy. Korah's children, it is said in chap. xxvi, 11, did not die with him. When God's judgments are poured forth they strike the great offenders first, then those who are with them. But the innocent are spared. So Moses called to the people to "depart from the tents of these wicked men, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." In this manner the Lord's mercy still lingered around them, although some had sympathized with them in their ignorance, and were partially guilty. And so his mercy is ever manifested in the midst of his greatest judgments. Christ is ever stretching out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people; and his ministers cry aloud and spare not to induce sinners to escape from the consequences of their sins. We read that even in the ultimate destruction of the mystical Babylon, the cry will be made, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. xviii, 4. And in this manner, on this occasion, the people who obeyed God escaped this terrible visitation. So Korah's children lived, although their father was consumed.

If men would only understand that God's judg-

ments will come upon the ungodly, and that they must depart from their ways if they would escape, it might be yet well with them. If we are partakers of the sins of other men, in all dispensations and in all ages, we shall be partakers of their punishment. When God wills to punish he has always the instruments at hand with which to accomplish his purpose—not only stormy wind, but fire and earthquake, fulfill his command. He can inflict a thousand forms of punishment. All the elements of nature are at his command, and will obey his will in punishing the offender. The whole universe is in league with God against his enemies. God may make use of many or all its agencies in the accomplishment of his final purposes. It would seem to my own mind that this whole transaction is eminently suggestive of the end of Rome. The Lord will make a new instrument for its destruction. It will be “by the breath of his mouth, and by the brightness of his coming.” Her plagues come in one day, “death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judged her.” Rev. xviii, 8. Just as the fire quickly consumed Korah and his company, and as the earth swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, and their families, so will God destroy his enemies, and all who have persecuted his people. The damnation will not linger.

Was it not so with the great Spanish Armada, which threatened the Protestantism of England and of the world? How quickly and surely was

it destroyed! And when God arose to destroy slavery in our land, did he not make short work of it? This evil, which the wisest and most conservative men thought it would take centuries to get rid of, was trampled into the dust in a few short years. But with what an expenditure of blood and tears! So will it be with intemperance and every other form of evil. "A short work will the Lord make of it in the earth." And now, while the fire is yet burning, the Lord commands Moses to take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. These were to be made into broad plates for a covering of the altar; "and they shall be for a sign unto the children of Israel." Here was a constant and permanent warning to them against a similar profanation of holy things, and against making any further insurrection against the Lord. This was a perpetual monument all through the ages for the instruction of his people against the dastardly conduct of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Verses 41-50.—*A New Rebellion.* Scarcely are these wicked men punished before there is another outbreak against Moses and Aaron. Only on *the morrow* afterward it broke out again. The cry is, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord"—just as if Moses and Aaron had sent the fire, and rent the earth, and made it open its jaws and swallow up Dathan and Abiram. Again, it was not really against Moses and Aaron that they rebelled; this new rebellion was also against *God*. Yet, again,

his judgments are speedily called forth. In an instant his glory appears, and its cloud covers the tabernacle. O what a scene was this, when he spoke to Moses and said, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment!" The danger was imminent, the remedy must at once be employed, or all Israel will be destroyed. So Moses ordered Aaron to take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go out quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord—*the plague is begun*. So Aaron "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." How quickly the judgment came, and how quickly came the relief! Here Aaron represents our great High-priest. Incense is an emblem of prayer. And Christ, as our High-priest, offers up on his golden censer the incense, with the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar before the throne. It is the smoke of that incense, mingled with these prayers, which ascends upward before God, out of his hands. Rev. viii, 3, 4. As Aaron stood between the dead and the living, so Christ stands constantly between us, pleading for us, lest the plague of divine vengeance should overthrow the whole race. He "hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor." Eph. v, 2.

It is very probable that the fourteen thousand who were smitten by the plague were all who were actively engaged in the insurrection; and thus this

whole rebellious element was eliminated from the congregation by fire and earthquake and plague. And how quickly it was done! In a very few short days the whole thing was squelched, and nothing of this kind has ever occurred since. It was God's great vindication of his own ordained servants, whom he had called—the one to rule over Israel and the other to be its high-priest. In like manner he has always vindicated his own true ministers who have faithfully served him and proclaimed his truth. God never goes back on his servants. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you alway." This matter of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram has filled the world with its fame, and it will do so in all the ages to come. No grander display of God's determination to interfere for his ministers has ever been made; no other will ever be needed. Even Jude, near the close of the New Testament canon, speaks of those who have "perished in the gainsaying of Korah."

THE ROD THAT BUDDER.

Chapter xvii, Verses 1-12.—The insurrection is not yet ended. Further demonstration is necessary for the establishment of the supremacy of the Aaronic priesthood, and the sovereignty of Moses. The plan adopted was, that a rod should be taken from each of the princes of the twelve tribes, and every man's name placed upon the rod. Upon the rod of the tribe of Levi the name of Aaron was to be written. These rods, so labeled, were to be laid up in the tabernacle of the congregation in view of the following test:—The rod which should bud and bloom was to indicate the one to whom God had intrusted the holy office of the priesthood. We may remember that Ezekiel was ordered to make a similar test—*vide* Ezek. xxxvii, 15, 16. This was, indeed, an ordinary custom among the Egyptians, and was now employed in Israel to vindicate God's choice. "Achilles, when engaged against Agamemnon, is made to swear a solemn oath by his scepter, which having once left its stock in the mountains shall never again grow. King Latinus is also represented by Virgil as confirming his covenant with Eneas by a similar oath."* But here were dry, seasoned rods, or sticks, with no sap, no

vitality in them. Humanly speaking, there was no possibility that these rods would ever bud or bloom. If they did so, or even one of them did so, it must be by the almighty power of God, so that in this way his own will can be clearly shown. But only twenty-four hours passed by, and lo! Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and borne almonds. Every other rod is handed back to its owner without bud, or blossom, or fruit, but dry, sapless, and worthless. Aaron's rod had gained the distinction which God had given to it. Here is a rich gospel truth imbedded, and it shines forth like a diamond from the dust. Our Lord Jesus Christ has given to the universe the grandest proof that he is *the* High-priest over the house of God. Is he not a "*rod* out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots?" Is he not as a root out of the dry ground, without form, or comeliness? And yet, was he not crowned with glory and honor? Do not the buds and blossoms burst forth from him with abundant fruitfulness? Is he not made, constituted, ordained, a "High-priest forever after the order of Melchizedek?" Surely all these things are clearly indicated here. And not only so. We are to consider that it was the *dry* rod which budded and blossomed. Is it not so with the Church—in itself a dry rod—but made fruitful by the Holy Spirit? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Thus it was that the Lord made the murmurings of Israel to cease upon this question. Ver 5. When Moses placed Aaron's rod in the tabernacle

it was a perpetual reminder to the children of Israel that God had set his seal upon the priesthood of Aaron. And so, when they looked upon the brazen plates upon the altar, or regarded Aaron's rod that budded, they were forcibly reminded of the folly of rebellion against the sovereignty of Moses, and the incontestable and infallible sign of the priesthood of Aaron. There can be no doubt that this rod of Aaron was subsequently lost, when there was no further need of it as an evidence of the divine origin of his priesthood. Some have thought it was lost when the ark was captured by the Philistines. It was not, evidently, in the ark when it was brought into Solomon's temple. The language of the apostle in his letter to the Hebrews does not conflict with this. This refers to the tabernacle rather than to the temple. And yet the Jews have a tradition that, when King Josiah ordered the ark to be put in the house which King Solomon built, the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna and the anointing oil were hidden with the ark, and that at that time the rod had buds and blossoms.

Once more there is an outcry from the people: "We die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?" This was no doubt the language of an anxious apprehension, and yet it is the language of repining. It is as much as to say, "God is a hard master; his service is a hard service; we cannot serve him without his

killing us." But the fault was their own. They had rebelled against the Lord's ordinance, and they had suffered the result. If they had been obedient to God, all would have gone well with them; but as they were not, destruction had come upon them.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST TYPIFIED.

Chapter xviii, Verses 1-32.—The great question of the ordination of the priesthood and of the persons who were to perform its duties having been settled, there now is revealed by the Lord his purpose concerning the persons who were to fill this office. If Aaron and his sons are to fill this office, then they are to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary and the burden of the priesthood. In these things the congregation were not to share, and for them they were not responsible. This word iniquity comprehended several things: (1.) The defilement of the sanctuary by the transgression of priests and people. (2.) In them Aaron was to offer the bullock of the sin-offering. (3.) For its defilements by the imperfections of the priests connected with their services and the offerings of the people. Thus Aaron and his successors were to wear the plate of fine gold inscribed with “holiness to the Lord,” that he “may bear the iniquity of the things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.”

What a striking type of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is *the* High-priest of our profession. He has not only made reconciliation for iniquity, but he

has also atoned for the weaknesses, frailties, and imperfections of his people, which are often exhibited even in their best services. How often we overlook the fact that, even in our rapt devotion, in our moments of closest communionship with God, evil thoughts are often suggested, drowsiness and sleep sometimes overtake us; and there are imperfections in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. What are we to do with these things? We cannot atone for them, nor provide against them. No, they all show to us our need of a great High-priest, and of his intercessions before the throne of the heavenly grace. Many disciples since Peter, James, and John have not been able to *watch* with their Lord for one hour. Slumber has stolen over them, and they have lain lifeless almost, and at least stupid and useless before him, with their prayer unuttered, and their heart's desire unexpressed. These, and a thousand other things, are borne by our High-priest for his people. He does all this in addition to his atoning work for our transgression and our sins.

Verses 8-19.—After repeating to them the duties and obligations devolving upon Aaron and his sons, in which they were to be aided by the Levites, God reveals to them his plan for their support. All the heave-offerings, oblations, meat-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, were set apart for them, so that all their sons and daughters were to eat of them. So all the best of the oil and wine and wheat and first-fruits were set apart for them by this divine ordinance. In addition to this, every

thing devoted in Israel was theirs; every thing born in Israel, whether of man or beast, only the first-born being redeemed. All these things were given them by a covenant of salt—an indissoluble covenant, still the sign of a covenant in Eastern countries—forever before the Lord unto them and their seed after them. But above all, infinitely above all, God himself was to be their inheritance. They were not to have, nor to seek, an inheritance in the land when they should come over the Jordan. God says to them, "*I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.*" No clearer illustration of the relation of Christ's ministers to him could have been given. True, no formal provision is made by him for his ministers; but the same principles herein recorded are eternal. God requires his people to take ample care of their ministers; and with this his servants are to be satisfied. We have known ministers who have refused to be satisfied with this, and who have entered into business relations, speculations, farming, mining, lecturing, etc., to eke out, as they have said, their scanty support. But having watched some of these cases for years with great carefulness we have observed that all these things have failed. And not only so, they have not had the sympathy, the co-operation, the support from the churches which they have served, which they might have had had they accepted God's offer and trusted in God's provision and promise. The consequences have usually been inefficiency, much fault-finding among their people,

slowness of meeting their obligations, and premature decline and decay. But we have never known a case where a man has swung out upon God's promise alone, taking him for his portion and inheritance, where such a one has lacked either support or success. God's hand is fully open to his servants who serve him and take him for their inheritance; and he never fails them. Early in my own ministry I was tempted to disbelieve God's provision and promise, and I longed to go out into the business of the world. But after a long and severe chastisement, for which I am now thankful, my eyes were opened; and never since that time have I failed to take God for my portion and my inheritance. Nor have I failed of support. If it has not come from one source, it has come from another; *but it has come*. Well does a recent writer say, "What poor, forlorn, forsaken feelings must have crept over the Levites! They owned no corner-lots; they were forbidden to do so." "Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the Lord is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them." Deut. xviii, 2. Poor fellows! No inheritance but God and his word! Only think of it! No chance to invest their hard earnings and scrimped-up savings! What ever shall they do? Nothing and no one to depend upon but God, and the kindness and fidelity of his people! O minister of the living God, is this the thought of thine heart—that thou art deprived of the chances of saving and making and investing money, such as are enjoyed

by the laity? "The Lord is thine inheritance." Let all ministers, then, remember this. God is responsible for our support; God will take care of his servants; God will provide for them. Let us never doubt this. He may not give us all we want. He may permit us to be sorely tried; but he will never leave us nor forsake us. He has yet his ravens. He has the gold and the silver of the world at his command, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and he will never suffer his faithful servants to want the necessities of life.

THE LAVER OF REGENERATION.

Chapter xix, Verses 1-10.—There is, perhaps, more Gospel in this chapter than is found in any other part of this book. The whole scene before us is full of the Gospel. The red heifer, with no blemish, and whose neck was unburdened with a yoke, her sprinkled blood, her complete incineration, and the ceremonially purifying power of the sprinkling of the water all indicate the great facts of redemption. Let us look wonderingly at these things. And first at the *red heifer*. She was to be all red, from hoof to horn. The Jews say, "If but two hairs were black or white it was unlawful." This is generally supposed to refer to Christ's body. The word *Adam* signifies red earth. So in Isaiah's vision, he who came from Bozrah was "red in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength." Some think this color is emblematical of life; others of sin; but doubtless the reference is to Christ's body. This red heifer was separated from the herd. So was Christ, who was "without spot or blemish," "holy, harmless, undefiled, and *separate* from sinners." She was never to have borne any yoke. So he was without sin; none of its bondage had ever been endured by him; all his bonds were those of his own love. So he said of himself,

“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The heifer was to be conducted without the camp. And what does the apostle say? “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” The offering was to be made and the blood sprinkled directly before the door of the tabernacle. “This heifer was usually slain upon Mt. Olivet, eastward from the temple, across the valley of the Kedron. Here the priest was able, through the open eastern gate of the temple-court, to behold the sanctuary in the duties of which he was to sprinkle the heifer’s blood. Thus the sinless antitype had to bear the reproach of associating with sinners. And as the heifer was expelled from the precincts of the camp, so was the Saviour cut off in no small means during his life from the fellowship of chief representatives of theocracy, and, finally, put to death between two thieves.”* Then the body was to be wholly burned. And so Christ offered up himself as a whole burnt-offering for us amid the agonies of his cross. What does this indicate to us but that Christ suffered and died for us? And those fires which burned so fiercely tell us how the wrath of God, under which his soul was consumed and his heart was broken asunder, was poured forth upon him. The ashes of the heifer were to be gathered up by a clean person and preserved for the use of the congregation.

* *Bible Commentary.*

The ashes of the heifer were supposed to be good for many years; some say for centuries. Indeed, some say that the ashes of this heifer, here ordered to be sacrificed, lasted until near the captivity—or nearly a thousand years; while others say that during the five hundred years between the time of Ezra and the destruction of the second temple, eight were slain. However this may be, we know from this chapter that the ashes were laid up for purifying purposes; not only for ceremonial uncleanness, but also for actual sin. Vers. 9–17. This provision was not only for all the children of Israel, but also for the stranger that sojourned among them; none were excluded from its benefits. So Christ's death was for *all*; not only for the Jews, but for all mankind. All employed in the slaughter and burning of the heifer were rendered unclean by so doing. And were not all rendered guilty who put to death the Son of God? His betrayer, his judges, his persecutors, his executioners—all were guilty. What they did was with wicked hands. And yet they *might*, and perhaps some of them *did*, find mercy who did these things. The Jews say, "It is a mystery which even Solomon could not understand, that this sacrifice should *pollute* those which were clean, and purify those who were not clean." But with us there is no mystery. Those who put the Lord Jesus to death were made guilty by so doing; and yet those who in this way became guilty could be purified by his death. How many beautiful points of gospel truth are here! Here

is what Paul wrote to Titus, and probably with reference to this ceremony: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing [the laver] of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Verses 12-16.—This water of purifying was first for those who had touched a dead body. He that touched the dead body of a beast was only "unclean until the evening;" while he that touched that of a man was "unclean seven days." This is a mystery which we can only explain by saying that the death of man was, and is, the wages of sin. Death is one thing to a beast, and another to a man. It is marvelous how defiling the touch of a dead man's body, or of a grave, is still regarded, not only by Jews, but also among other nations. The custom of shunning graves is traceable in various forms among many nations of antiquity; perhaps especially so among the Egyptians. The priests were obliged to shun graves, funerals, and funeral feasts. The Persian Zendavesta had rules of remarkable strictness, particularly on this subject, and these were exceeded by the rules prevailing among the Indians, both ancient and modern. Like rules are found among the Romans. "The tapas, or uncleanness, regarded among the Maories of New Zealand as attaching to the man who has handled the dead is such that he can not only not enter a house or come in contact with any person or thing without defiling it, but he may not even

put forth his own hands to the food which he himself eats." *

Look then at how the ashes were to be applied. As the water in which the ashes were placed was to purify the unclean, so "the blood of Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Ye are washed, . . . sanctified, . . . justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The water in which the ashes were thrown was to be sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. And in view of this David prays: "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." "As to the manner of using it, the stalk, or bunch of hyssop, was wrapt round with scarlet wool to make it absorb the blood, being tied with the same wool to a staff, if of cedar-wood, to keep it stiff. The most approved explanation of the hyssop is that it is a plant growing on stone walls, *hyssopus officinalis*, with small lancet-formed woolly leaves about an inch long, a knotty stalk from one foot to one and a half high, with blue (sometimes white) flowers." † Christ's blood is said to be "sprinkled upon us." It is called, "The blood of sprinkling." And is not faith the hyssop-branch? Do we not by faith appropriate and apply this blood? Is it not by faith in it that we are cleansed?

Here, then, we see clearly God's great plan. I do not mean to say that all, or any considerable number of them, saw this clearly. Surely none of

* *Bible Commentary.*

† Alford, Heb. ix, 19.

them saw it as clearly as we do ; but some of them saw it sufficiently for their salvation. But to our eyes each step seems clear. The whole way and plan of salvation are made known to us. Surely no one can have the blood of Christ sprinkled upon him in vain. Its power has never failed. It never can fail, it never will.

“ Jesus, thy blood, thy blood alone,
Hath power sufficient to atone ;
Thy blood can make me white as snow ;
No Jewish types could cleanse me so.”

DEATH OF MIRIAM AND AARON.

Chapter xx, Verse 1.—After thirty-eight years of wandering they are now again at Kadesh. Many scenes have been passed through—many dangers since they were driven back by divine justice from the very borders of the promised land. Not only so. The large proportion of those who had come out of Egypt had died, and their bones were bleaching in the wilderness. But up to this period Moses and Aaron and Miriam had survived. Now, however, the time had come for Miriam to depart. She, too, had been rebellious, even against the Lord and the authority of her own brother. Therefore she could not see the holy land. It was in Kadesh that the summons came to her, and she departed from the world, a wonderful woman, with this awful stigma associated always with her name. She was the sister, the only sister, of Moses and Aaron, so far as we know. She was, probably, older than her brothers. She must have been so, if, as tradition informs us, she was the one who spoke for Moses when found as a babe in his ark in the waters, and directing Pharaoh's daughter, "Thermutes," to his own mother as a nurse. In Kadesh also she was buried. Eusebius says in his day Miriam's sepulcher was still known, apparently either at Petra or

not far from it. She had been a prominent character in Israel. Her timbrel and her song had frequently rung out among them, giving to them inspiration, hopefulness, and joy. But, alas! even she had been a murmurer, and she was prevented from entering into the land of promise. How often good men and good women, with generally amiable characters, and with elements of great success in them, stumble, murmur, and complain against the Lord and his servants without any cause, and thus excite the divine displeasure against themselves. Well may we quote the language of the apostle, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Verses 2-13.—The children of Israel are in Kadesh, but the water has failed, and its reproduction is a necessity. The people have again proved their heredity by breaking out into the old murmurs against Moses which had been heard far back at Rephidim. Again they wish they had died when their brethren died before the Lord. Again they urge against him that *he* had brought up the children of Israel and their cattle to die in the wilderness. And again they chide with him for bringing them into this evil place. Perhaps the supply from the rock had suddenly failed, or a supply had been found in some parts of the district and a scarcity in others. For some cause, however, the water had ceased its flow, and as that fell away the murmurings increased. No wonder that their leaders were nervous and dispirited. No wonder that they

had nothing to say. But, in their distress and trouble, they "went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces." Then it was, as always in the past, that "the glory of the Lord appeared unto them." Again the Lord gives them directions as to the course to be pursued in order to secure a supply of water. Moses was commanded to take his wonder-working rod and *speak* to the rock in presence of the people, with the assurance that once more the waters would flow. This was not Aaron's rod which had budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit; but his own old rod which he had in the desert when God appeared to him in the bush; which had been pointed heavenward and had swept over the doomed land of Egypt; which he had waved over the dark billows of the Red Sea; and which had brought water out of the rock at Horeb. That rod was indeed a type of the Gospel, an emblem of its might and power. The assembly was then convened before the rock, that they might see the work which the Lord would do. But Moses and Aaron were not commanded to *smite* the rock, but only to *speak* to it. This was all that was necessary, and the promise of supply for themselves and their cattle was given. But Moses and Aaron were discouraged and petulant; Moses lost his meekness, and both he and his brother relapsed into unbelief. It was in this spirit that they approached the rock. Then they forgot the command of the Lord; then they forgot their intimate

and close relation with Israel, and coming to the rock they said: "Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" And then, forgetful of the divine command, he "lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice."

"The rock referred to so graphically here, which was struck by Moses, is isolated. It is twenty feet wide by twelve feet high. A deep cut runs down its side [the work of Moses's rod] whence flowed the waters of Meribah and Massah."* Here were both doubt and unbelief. Moses might have said in his heart, "I have my rod, what should I do but smite the rock?" His anger was shown in smiting it twice. The water came as promised; came abundantly; but their words and actions had displeased the Lord. Israel had witnessed their impatience and their disobedience, and had heard their angry words. What now remains? Because of like unbelief their brethren had been forbidden the privilege of entering the land of Canaan; so now they must not enter into that land. They had not sanctified God in the sight of Israel, so they could not bring the congregation into it. There can be no doubt that all this had been foreseen and provided for. It was a part of God's plan that Moses, *the representative of the law*, could not bring his people into the land of promise. "The law makes nothing perfect; but it was the bringing in of a better hope." So Moses could not bring the people in; that was left for Joshua, Christ's type as a Sav-

* Mr. Wilson, in *July Century*, 1883.

our. The law saves no man; it sanctifies no man; it is only Christ who can bring us in. But he, our Joshua, can bring us in. He is the spiritual, the heavenly, the divine Joshua, the mighty Conqueror, who brings his people across the Jordan, and places them

“ In a land of corn and wine and oil.”

It has been shown that the waters from the rock in Horeb typified the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit, communicated to us through the atonement of Christ, when he was smitten for our sins. The smiting of the rock needed not to be repeated; for though it was not the same rock, it was the outward sign of the same spiritual benefit. It was, therefore, only requisite to *speak* to it. And thus Christ, having once been smitten and wounded for our transgressions, needs not to be smitten any more; but only to be spoken to in the prayer of faith accompanying the preaching of the Gospel, and the waters will flow forth.

Verses 22-29.—*The Death of Aaron.* Aaron is now summoned to Mt. Hor, there to lay aside his sacerdotal vestments, and then to die. “Mt. Hor is the modern Jebel Harun, and is situated on the eastern side of the Arabah and close to Petra. It rises as a dark red rock five thousand feet above the Mediterranean. It is remarkable for its two summits, on one of which is still shown a small square building, crowned with a dome, which is called the tomb of Aaron.”* The whole narrative

* *Bible Commentary.*

is deeply interesting. How readily and calmly Aaron complied with the command. Moses had earnestly longed to go over into the land of promise; but we never read of any expression of desire on the part of Aaron. So now he begins the vast ascent, although an old man. Still, with his brother, who is so soon to follow him, he climbs the steep. Death has no terrors for him. He had seen Miriam die; now he is ready to go. When death begins his work in a family which has long been shielded from his power he usually goes right forward with his work. It would be only a little time now before Moses would depart, and thus the three great representatives of Israel will have passed away to their fathers. Aaron is stripped of his vestments, indicating that his priesthood would ultimately be disannulled, and that one after the order of Melchizedek should arise. Dean Stanley, in one of his lectures, says that "the succession of the priesthood was made through that singular usage, and preserved even unto the latest days of the Jewish hierarchy, by the transference of the vesture and drapery of the dead high-priest to his living successor." Aaron was now about one hundred and twenty-three years old; and still, like Moses, his natural power, or force, does not seem to have been abated. He was removed in the fullness of his age, ere decrepitude had unfitted him for his sacred office. How solemn was the scene! Only Moses and Eleazar are present. There seems to be no pang of death, no anguish at his approach.

With his brother he had long served his people, and, with few exceptions, had served them well. Now he was to depart. When the sacred vestments were removed from him doubtless he quietly lay down and died. The whole congregation, in the clear atmosphere of the desert, could see the process of his departure. And no wonder that, when all was over, "they mourned for Aaron for thirty days; even all the house of Israel."

His death indicated the ultimate transference of his priesthood to that of Christ, because of the mortality and imperfections of its possessors. So Paul says: "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man [Christ Jesus], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." And beautifully does he add: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii, 23-25.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

Chapter xxi, Verses 6-10.—The evangelistic character of this section of this chapter is clearly seen. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself gives it this distinction: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John iii, 14, 15. Many have thought that the brazen serpent was not a type of Christ. But why not? Certainly not because it was so insignificant; certainly not because it was of brass. Other objects of no more importance in themselves are regarded as types of him—as the lamb, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, and the lion. But supposing that it is not a type of him, it is certainly one of the most beautiful illustrations of his work, and of salvation by faith in him. Let us sketch a few points:

1. The provision of this brazen serpent was made necessary on account of the sins of the people. They had murmured again, even amid their victories over King Arad and his hosts. Murmured for bread and water, when there was abundance of both within their reach. Their ingratitude, like ours, is senseless, inexplicable, and baseless. No wonder that the Lord was displeased

with them; no wonder that his anger was enkindled against them. And was not Christ provided for a race of sinners, guilty, ruined, and lost? Did he not die even for his enemies? Was it not the sins of the world which made it necessary for him to die? Surely there was no other cause for his appearing, his agony, and his death.

2. This provision was made through the mercy of God. They came with penitence and confession, saying: "We have sinned, we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." It was then that the infinite mercy of God interposed for them, and provided this deliverance. The brightest and most beautiful utterance ever made in the cold, dull ear of this world is, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the kindred one: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." It was only infinite goodness and mercy that made this provision of salvation.

3. But what was the source of all this trouble in Israel? The Lord had sent among them fiery serpents, because of their sins. The country through which they were passing was then, and is now, full of poisonous serpents. Perhaps, up to this time, they had been held in check by the power and presence of the Lord; but now they are allowed to proceed against them.

Laborde tells us of an incident which occurred in

his camp in this region. "The night passed over quietly, and the cold of the morning had warned us to rise, when we found beneath the carpet which formed our bed a large scorpion of a yellow color, and three inches in length. When he was detected he endeavored to effect his escape, though not with sufficient rapidity to ensure his safety; but our Arabs did not wish that he should be killed. . . . The Alaouins tell us that scorpions and serpents abound in this part of the desert." He further tells us: "The fact thus recorded in Scripture is fully confirmed by the Arabs, as well as by the vast numbers of these reptiles which we found two leagues to the east of this place, on our return to Akabah."

These serpents are called "fiery." Many conjectures have arisen to account for this expression. Some have thought it was because of the deadliness of their bite; others because of the brightness of their color; others because of the blazing sunbeams on their scales; and others still because of the burning inflammation caused by their bite. Ellicott says the word denotes a peculiar kind of serpent. It has been thought to be different from any of the poisonous serpents still to be found in the Akabah. A recent writer has suggested that the "Imamba," popularly called "Mamba," is the kind here referred to. Most serpents wait to be assaulted or injured before they attack a person; but this one does not wait for these things. It pursues its victims from afar. It has been known to pursue a horseman. An En-

glish explorer says that "in Zululand a party of children seeing a 'Mamba' in the field ran for safety to the public road. But the snake pursued them, and bit two of them fatally. There is no cure for its bite, and death follows within an hour." The bearers of Livingstone's body met with one as they were bringing their deceased leader to the coast. As the procession moved through a defile a monster snake, with a bright crest, darted from a thicket, bit a little girl who was in the van, and then disappeared with lightning speed into the thicket on the opposite side. The child died within twenty minutes.

Isaiah twice mentions a fiery *flying* serpent. Whether this is the one mentioned here, or not, we cannot tell. No such serpent is known to naturalists now.

4. In order that the poor bitten Israelites, many of whom had already died, might obtain relief and healing, Moses was ordered to make this serpent of brass, to lift it upon a pole, or banner-staff, and place it in a position from which all might see it. The Jews in the fact that this serpent was made of brass think they see a miracle within a miracle. They say that brass is hurtful to those who have been bitten by a serpent. A great writer thinks that reference is perhaps made to Esculapius, the god of healing, who is usually represented with a serpent by him, or holding a rod with a serpent twisted round it; to his being worshiped in the form of a serpent, and to his being

enrolled among the stars under the person and name of Ophinchus.*

Let us now notice several particulars of the fact as presented: (a) It was made *like* the serpent by which they were bitten. It had its form and color. So it was necessary that Christ should be made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He had the form and appearance of the sin-smitten race which he had come to redeem. His body, in many respects, was like ours—with all the frailties of our human frames. His human soul was subjected to limitations with our own. In all points he was made like unto us, except one. (b) This leads us to notice that while this brazen serpent had the form of the fiery, *it had none of its poison*. It could not bite; it could not inject poison into the person. In itself it was utterly harmless. How true all this is of Christ! "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." "Tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin." Having the form of man, but having none of his sin. (c) Look, again, at the fact that this serpent of brass must be lifted up on a banner-staff. This expression is made concerning Christ three times in the gospels. "Even so, must the Son of man be *lifted up*." "When ye have *lifted up* the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he." John viii, 28. "And I, if I be *lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii, 32. Christ said, "Even so *must* the Son of Man be *lifted up*." There was a necessity for this, high as the

* *Vide* Kitto, vol. ii, p. 192.

heavens, because that without this man could never reach that home; deep as hell, for if he had not been lifted up, we must have sunken to its very depths; and vast as eternity, for without this our eternal well-being could never have been secured. But not only must he be lifted up on the cross, although this is the central thought of this illustration, and the center of man's hope; but he must, also, be lifted up from the grave in vindication of his purpose and his claims; and he must be lifted up—exalted to the right hand of God—to the place where he was before, not only as the Son of God, but as the God-man, the Saviour, Mediator, and Intercessor of the world.

Is it not well worth our while here to say that what caused the necessity for such an amazing exhibition of love was "the great dragon—that old serpent, called the devil." Was he not the tempter of our first parents? Did he not bring upon our race the curse of the fall? Is it not by him that we are stung or bitten? And is not Christ, the great Deliverer, typified by the brazen serpent? Is he not the eternal antagonist of the poisoned and envenomed serpent which typically bit and caused the inflammation and death of so many Israelites? Surely, if the old serpent has brought death upon our race, and all our woe, Christ brings relief and salvation.

It is a beautiful thought to us that the brazen serpent was provided for all the tribes of Israel, and especially for every serpent-bitten one of every

tribe. It was not merely for Judah, nor for Dan, nor for Ephraim; but for all. The remedy was as ample as the demand; so truly does this illustrate Christ's work. He did not die for the Jewish race, the descendants of Abraham alone; nor for distinctive portions of other nations and tribes of men; but he died for every nation, and for every sinful soul of every nation. Wherever the sin-bitten soul is found, there is the provided salvation, abundant and free. Yet another condition is found in this connection. Not only was the brazen serpent lifted up; but the bitten ones must *look upon* it. This was the Lord's condition for curing: "That *every one* that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." Again, "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." It was just as essential for the bitten one to *look upon* the brazen serpent as it was for God to provide it. If he did not look, the poison would go on working in his frame until death came to him; otherwise no one could be healed. Beautifully is it said in the Book of Wisdom, "He that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing which he saw, but by thee. Thou art the Saviour of all." Chap. xvi, 7. Yet he must look; simply look. Wonder of wonders that by this simple process he could be healed! It was only to look and live. So the blessed Christ, the great antitype, says, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish." We must further consider the glorious fact that every one who *looked*

lived. No matter how rich or how poor, how old or how young, whether slightly or deeply bitten—all who looked lived. And is it not so with Jesus? Does not every soul that looks upon him with an eye of faith live? Have not unnumbered millions thus looked and been saved? Are they not now before the throne, eternally saved, simply by “looking unto Jesus?” And are not millions now on the way to the Eternal City of God, who have thus been healed?

True, the bite is fearful, the wound inflamed, the death-rattle may already be in the throat; but look, O look, dear soul, and thou shalt be saved.

“Stung by the scorpion, sin,
My poor expiring soul
The balmy sound drinks in,
And is at once made whole.
See there my Lord upon the tree;
I see, I feel, he died for me.”

One more thought. Probably the brazen serpent was lifted up near the center of the camp. It certainly must have been in a position where all could see it; if not, the provision would have so far failed. But it seems plain, from the history, that all might see it; and that all who were bitten *did* see it. So Christ was lifted up in the center of the world. Guyot, the great geographer, has well said, “Western Asia is not only the geographical center of the human family, but it is, moreover, the spiritual center; it is the cradle of man’s moral nature.” It was right here, in the center, in the heart of the human race, that Christ was lifted up, that all might look

on him and live. Thus he stands as the great center of attraction to earth and heaven; standing up in the midst of the nations to draw all hearts toward him. He becomes the center of our faith, our hope, and our joy. And may it not be that Christ's cross is the great center of all God's works? Is it not the great point between two eternities—the everlasting provision and promise of the eternity that is past, and the everlasting wonder and joy and triumph of the eternity to come? So by his cross Jesus has reconciled "all things unto himself," "things in heaven, τοῖς οὐρανοῖς—in the heavens, on earth, and things under the earth." Here, then, in the midst of the eternities, in the center of the universe; in the geographical, spiritual, and moral center of the race; in the center of revelation, Christ is lifted up. Toward him and his cross the eve of every archangel and angel, seraph and cherub, of every redeemed and glorified spirit is turned. Toward him, as the Saviour and Redeemer, mayhap, every eye in the universe is directed; and even from this little wrecked and lost orb on which we dwell millions are looking to him. He is thus the cynosure of all eyes; the hope, the joy, the salvation of all worlds.

We close this little dissertation on the brazen serpent by saying, it was preserved for seven hundred years, until the days of Hezekiah, when it had become so much the object of idolatrous worship that he called it Nehushtan, "a piece of brass," and brake it in pieces. 2 Kings xviii, 4.

BALAK AND BALAAM.

Chapter xxii, Verses 1-7.—This chapter contains the history of a frightened king and of a false prophet. The latter is mentioned in various parts of both the Old and New Testaments. The history itself is peculiar, indicating to us to what resorts fear will drive us, and how far money or rewards will lead one who, at the first, seems to be proof against all attack in these directions. Balak had heard of all that had been done to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and to Og, the king of Bashan; and he was, evidently, sorely afraid. What could he do? His legitimate as well as natural allies and helpers had been destroyed, and the prospect of his own speedy destruction seems clearly before his eyes. He was not evidently aware of the needlessness of his trepidation and alarm, for God had given charge to Moses: "Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle." Deut. ii, 9. It has been thought that Balak was a Midianite, but that he had been imposed upon the Moabites as their king by their Amoritish conquerors. Probably his perturbations were intensified by this fact. Calling together the elders of Midian, they agree to send for Balaam, the son of Beor, in order that he might curse Israel, so that he could prevail against them.

Balaam was a soothsayer, a diviner, and an enchanter. He lived among the highlands of Mesopotamia, from eighteen to twenty days distant from the plains of Moab. He certainly must have been well known in this region, and Balak, with his knowledge of him, concluded to send for him, although the journey was long and the cost might be great. He was evidently one who knew, and, in a sense, honored, the Lord Jehovah. His name is probably derived from *bala*, "to devour," with the terminal syllable *am*, or from the two words, *bala*, "he devoured," and *am*, "people." "His father's name (Beor) from *baar*, "to consume," has been thought to denote that Balaam belonged to a family in which the magical art was hereditary. In Josh. xiii, 22 he is called a "soothsayer." * The purpose for which the messengers were sent was to invite Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel. This was a very common practice in the ancient times, and the custom is still observed among the heathen. We have an ancient form of this execration preserved by Macrobius, an author of the fourth century: "Almighty Father of gods and men, or if thou wouldest rather be addressed as Jupiter, or if any other appellation be more grateful to thine ear, pour out, I conjure thee, upon 'this army' or 'this city,' as the case may be, the spirit of terror and dismay; deprive of the sight of their eyes all those who shall level their blows against us, our legions, or troops; spread darkness over all our en-

emies, over their cities, over their fields, over their armies. Look upon them as a thing accursed; bring them under the hardest conditions that ever an enemy was constrained to undergo. As for me, to destruction, to destruction I devote them; my curse I pour upon them, and take this prince, these captains, this people to be witness of it." *

There can be no doubt that Balak believed in the potency of Balaam's magical incantations. He must have done so, or he would not have taken such pains to secure them. It is frequently noticed, however, in this history, that all his efforts were unavailing, and his curses were turned into blessings. Vers. 8-14. When the messengers arrived from Balak, his only answer was, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." During that night, while he still seemed to hold fast his integrity, God appeared to him and asked him, "What men are these here with thee?" Then he gave him the command, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed." So in the morning, when he rose up, he said to the men whom Balak had sent, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." Then the princes of Moab rose up and went to Balak, and told him all they had done and its result. Probably, also, they intimated to Balak that he might be induced to come if larger rewards were promised to him.

Verses 14-21.—Accordingly more princes are

* *Saturnalia*, book iii, c. 9.

sent, more and larger rewards are offered, and Balaam begins to tamper with temptation. But even while doing this his talk is bold and brave, and his aspect devout and reverential. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." He would have them, however, tarry another night. It was during that night that God permitted him to go. His love for the wages of unrighteousness had conquered him; he had, doubtless, made up his own mind to go, and the Lord allows him to do so, but only under the most rigid limitations. So he rose up in the morning to arrange for his departure, and went with the princes. He made haste to secure "the wages of unrighteousness." O how often money will break down men's character, emasculate their consciences, and lead them into ruin which lies at their feet!

Verses 21-34.—But he is not to go without further warning. While on his journey the Lord sent an angel to stand in his way, with a drawn sword in his hand. But his eyes were so blinded that he did not see him. And yet the ass saw him, and when smitten by Balaam for refusing to go forward, opened his mouth and spoke to him. This was a remarkable, but not a unique, instance of the power of animals to speak. The heathen writers, Greek and Roman, refer to animals as having this power. Mythology tells us that Bacchus gave the power of speech to the ass which carried him over a river. This may have been traditionally con-

nected with this event. Homer tells us that the horse of Achilles had the faculty of speech given him by Juno. Pliny says that it is commonly reported among the ancients that an ox spoke. Livy mentions an ox which spoke in divers places, and tells of one particularly, which said, "Rome, take care of thyself." Elianus tells of a lamb that spoke in the times of Bocchoris. Others speak of the ram of Phrixus, the dog of Ariminum, and the elephant of Phorus, in India. But "here the Lord opened the mouth of the ass." His speaking was a miracle. Peter says, "Balaam was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet." Surely he had enough to warn him in these transactions, with the angel and his drawn sword, and the ass with man's voice speaking to him. But all these things were insufficient.

Balaam is now permitted to go on with the princes. And there is no inconsistency here. The absolute prohibition in this case was with reference to the cursing, and not to the going with the princes. "The going with the messengers, which was forbidden in mercy at first, was enjoined in judgment at last. God often punishes disobedience to his declared will by permitting the transgressors to eat the fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own devices."* In like manner God permits the dumb ass to speak to him who was accustomed only to observe the braying of this animal. Many

* Ellicott.

think it strange that he did not express surprise that he was thus addressed. This, however, is not remarkable. Homer does not notice that Achilles was astonished at his horse speaking to him when his mouth was opened by Herè; but he is mentioned as simply replying to the horse without any special notice of the prodigy. Both Balaam and Achilles were too much absorbed in the business on hand to do any thing else. How much pains the Lord takes to prevent us from going in the ways of iniquity! How he often hedges up our path! How he puts obstacles in our way! And when we are determined to follow certain lines of conduct which are offensive to him, how he prevents us from doing what would injure his Church and his chosen ones! "He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him; and he restraineth the remainder of wrath." Little did Balaam now think that he was going to death. Little did he think that in a short time he would be slain, and that his name would be held up before the passing ages as a synonym of all that is base and evil in false ambition, covetousness, and evil counsel. But so it was, and so it ever will be with such characters. He saw only the reward which Balak would give him for his professional auguries; and, in his own mind, his plans were laid for future greatness and honor. But how easily and how fully the Lord overthrew them all. So he has done with millions, and so he is doing still. But too seldom do men pause long enough to listen to the voice of God.

BALAAM AND HIS WORK.

Chapter xxiii, Verses 1-11.—Balaam has now reached Balak, the two are together, and now his work begins. This is begun under the formal pretense of offering sacrifices to God. There can be no reasonable doubt that Balak was the real offerer. Chap. xxii, 40. Kings often acted as priests in the olden times. Seven was regarded as a sacred number by the Greeks and Romans. And long ages before their national existence, when these sacrifices were offered, they went to a high, a lonely, solitary, mountain place, some barren summit, when they hoped to hear from Balaam the hoped-for curses against Israel. Now the Lord who opened the ass's mouth opens Balaam's, and causes him to speak words which are contrary to his own perverse will. He cannot curse whom the Lord delights to bless. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone [or it is a people that dwelleth alone] and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Hengstenberg well remarks here: "How truly Balaam said that Israel did not reckon itself with the heathen appears from the fact that, while all the powerful empires of the ancient world—the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and others—have utterly perished, Israel (which even under the old covenant

was rescued from so many dangers that threatened its entire destruction, particularly in being brought back from exile) flourishes anew in the Church of the new covenant, and continues also to exist in that part of it which, though at present rejected, is destined to restoration at a future period." * It is in the midst of these inspirations that he expresses a desire which has since been adopted by millions: "Let me die the death of the righteous; and let my last end be like his." Yet while he gives utterance to this desire, his whole character and conduct are such as to be diametrically opposite to his convictions and desires. No man can die the death of the righteous unless he first *is* righteous. And yet how many are deceiving themselves with the vain hope that in some way, by some fortuitous circumstances into the nature of which they do not pause to inquire, nor how or when they will occur, after all they may die the death of the righteous. And hence they often endeavor to palliate their conduct and excuse their wickedness. They will call their covetousness economy; their extortion fraud, and overreaching in business shrewdness; their licentiousness a necessity; and their false ambition a laudable desire to rise in the world. Then they also vainly attempt to magnify their good deeds. Do they not believe in God? Do they not respect religion? Do they not occasionally attend, or even belong to, the Church of God? Do they not speak well of Christians, espe-

* *History of Balaam.*

cially if they are not too pious? Do they not even contribute occasionally to the cause of God? O, these are the ones who in the last day will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?" And then the Master will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Then their character will be unmasked, and eternity will echo their reproach and curses for their madness and folly. It should never be forgotten that if we live in sin we shall die in sin; and that, however we may desire to die the death of the righteous, such a result is simply impossible if we have lived in sin and folly. Like the professional fool whom a great king invested with a staff, cap, and bells, and then told him to wear them until he found a greater fool than himself. By and by the king was dying. He sent for the fool, and told him he was going on a journey, a very long journey, and that he would never return. "What provision have you made for the journey?" said the fool. "None," said the dying king. "What!" said the fool. "Are you going into eternity without making any provision for it?" "Yes," said the king, with a heavy sigh. The fool dropped his staff, cap, and bells and laid them before the king, saying, "I was only to keep them till I found a greater fool than myself: and I have found him."

Verses 11-25. — What must have been the surprise, mortification, and disgust of Balak when he heard the blessing of Balaam upon Israel! But an-

other trial must be made at once. He had probably first seen the whole of Israel spread out before him in the encampment; now he is only to see the utmost part of them. It may be that Balak conceived Balaam had been frightened by the vastness of their numbers, if he had seen the whole of them; or if, as some suppose, he had only seen a part of them, he did not understand Balak's anxiety to be saved from the danger of such a formidable invasion. And yet, after the *second* trial, only blessings proceeded from his mouth upon Israel. He stands upon Pisgah—a hill; was it the same upon which Moses afterward stood, as he looked upon the promised land?—and then returns to Balak, saying in his ecstasy, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." They did not need any thing of this kind. They had God in the midst of them, revealing his acts, his counsel, and his will; what, then, did they need of enchantments, or divination?

Hengstenberg writes again of this scene: "What is here affirmed of Israel applies to the Church in all ages, and, also, to every individual believer. The Church of God knows from his own word what he does, and what it has to do in consequence. The wisdom of the world resembles augury and divination. The Church of God, which is in possession of his word, has no need of it." It might be further added that whenever the Church resorts to these worldly maneuverings to increase her numbers, her wealth, or her force it will always

fail; but when it relies upon God no weapon formed against it will prosper; no enemy will succeed in permanently injuring it, or hindering its progress.

“In the furnace God may prove thee,
 Thence to bring thee forth more bright;
 But can never cease to love thee,
 Thou art precious in his sight;
 God is with thee,
 God thine everlasting light.”

HIS LAST EFFORT.

Chapter xxiv, Verses 1-7.—Foiled in his attempts to curse Israel, Balaam is now overpowered by the divine Spirit, and, for a season, acts as God's mouth-piece. It may be asked, "Why did God condescend to use the mouth of this vile and wicked man?" Of this we cannot speak fully. But this is not the only instance in which he has done this thing. Did he not do it in the messengers of Saul, and afterward in Saul himself? Did he not do it in the case of Caiaphas? And can he not use whatever instrument he wills? Did he not use the mouth of the dumb ass, and cannot he use the mouth of the soothsayer? God certainly can use the mouth of a wicked man to proclaim his truth. There can be no doubt of this whatever. Why he does this, we cannot always, if ever, tell. These words of Balaam not only refer to ancient Israel, but more fully now to God's spiritual Israel. In this latter sense they have their highest and grandest fulfillment. The tents of Israel and the tabernacles of Jacob were good—beautiful. Beautiful in their order and in their numbers and in their significance. In themselves they were probably but coarse camel's-hair tents, but they were the dwelling-places of

a people whom God loved, and they were shadowed by his almighty wings.

So in the spiritual realm. God's Israel is only beautiful in the glory and honor which Christ gives. He makes even their enemies to praise them oftentimes. Not so much—not at all—for what they are in themselves, but for what Christ has made of them. All this vision of Balaam was the work of the Holy Spirit. He saw that of which he speaks. His outward eyes were shut, but his inward eyes saw the mighty movements of God's panorama of the nations, and seeing all this he fell upon his face in wonder and astonishment. So Ezekiel and Daniel and John fell, under the presence and glory of the Lord. Yet Balaam seems to claim the honor of all this. He boasts of the favor which God had shown him, and of his capacity to receive and transmit these truths. "He heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty."

Verse 7.—Here is a beautiful allusion to the blessings which Israel should bring to the nations; like a man carrying his buckets full of water. "This," says Bishop Wordsworth, "is a type and leading source of blessing and prosperity in the East, and is a beautiful type of the true Israel in the gospel day pouring out the living waters of salvation, the pure streams of the Spirit making the wilderness of the world to rejoice and be glad." "His kings shall be higher than Agag." This name of Agag seems to have been the title of the Amalekite kings. So he

was literally in Israel when Saul conquered him and Samuel slew him. His reference to Israel as a lion was true of him even then ; more true in the time of David and Solomon, and still more true under the gospel dispensation. Bishop Patrick says : " The lion does not retire into places of shelter to sleep, but he lies down anywhere, knowing that no one dares meddle with him." So " the righteous are bold as a lion." Fearing God, they do not fear any thing, or any one else. Truly, " blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curs-eth thee." This has been true in all the ages. The enemies of God's saints have cursed them at their peril. Great have been the calamities of those who have opposed or hindered them, and multiplied the blessings of those who have encouraged and helped them. This is the blessing which was pronounced upon Abraham by the Lord, and was afterward adopted by Isaac in the blessing pronounced upon Jacob. Nations have melted away, empires and kingdoms have fallen into the dust, but Israel lives, and the Jewish people have survived the changes of forty centuries. More than this. The Church of God has outlived all her enemies, has triumphed over them all, and is going forward victoriously to conquer the world. Israel is blessed of the Lord, and blessed she shall be. No weapon formed against her shall prosper ; no hand or tongue assailing her shall succeed. She dwells under the shadow of the Almighty, and none can make her afraid. Poor Balaam retires in dismay,

after once more giving to Balak an insight into the future blessedness and glory of Israel.

Verses 13-17.—It was no wonder that Balak's anger was kindled against him. So great, indeed, was it, that he smote his hands together, signifying by this action his feeling of intense indignation. This had kept him from the honor which Balak had intended to bestow, and from the wealth which he had designed to impart. Balaam was evidently not a man to eschew this honor or this wealth; but God had taken him into his own hands, so that he could only speak what the Lord ordered or permitted him to announce.

Now, in his final address, he utters all the Lord's counsel concerning the future of Israel. It was, doubtless, subsequent to this that he "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." But just now he is under a divine afflatus, and he must speak only as God commands.

Verses 17-25.—"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." The star is a fitting emblem of a great king or mighty ruler. It was perhaps in view of this that the pretender to the title of Messiah, in the days of the Emperor Adrian, took the name of Bar-Cocheba, "the son of a star." "The words of the magi, We have seen his star in the east (Matt. ii, 2), appear to have reference to this prophecy."* This was "the star

* Ellicott.

of Bethlehem," "the bright and the morning star." Above the brilliancy of a thousand suns he sheds his light upon man's dreary pathway, and points him to salvation and mansions of endless rest. There can be no doubt of the application of this utterance to the Messiah. Many Jewish interpreters so regard it. As Ibn Ezra says: "These words are interpreted by some as belonging to David; but by many as belonging to the Messiah." But some may say, "Christ did not smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Heth, and make Edom a possession and Seir also for his enemies." True, but Moab and Edom are spoken of representatively, and signify the enemies of Christ and his Church. As such Christ has smitten them, and will yet smite them more fully. True, David, who was a type of the Messiah, smote the corners of Moab, and took possession of Edom and Mount Seir; but Christ shall smite all his foes, and reign victoriously over all his enemies. Amalek was destroyed in the days of Samuel, its king hewn into pieces by the prophet, and the nation has disappeared from the earth. So with the strongly fortified Kenites; then and afterward the securest of the nations, they were to be carried into captivity with the ten tribes by the Assyrians. It matters not how strong or how powerful nations may be, they will fall into desuetude and decay if they array themselves against God. It is truly marvelous to see how far-reaching this prophecy of Balaam is, looking forward not only fifteen hundred years before Christ, but also to

the time of the Romans and the Greeks. The ships which were to come from Chittim (ver. 24) refer, it is thought, to these powers. The Vulgate identifies the Chittim with the Romans; other authorities identify them with the Greeks. So it is thought in the prophecy of Isaiah that the isles of Chittim have evident reference to Greece. This reference to Rome pagan and Rome papal as a persecuting power is significant. The ships which were to come from the coast of Chittim were to "afflict Eber." Some have thought that this refers to the Jews only. And how much they afflicted the Jews God only knows. But the word has a larger significance, and includes *all* of God's people. No mind can conceive, and no tongue can tell, how much they have afflicted and persecuted God's saints. In prison and amphitheater, in dungeons and exile, in tortures and deaths they for ages did this work. But it seems from this prophecy that this persecuting power shall perish forever. Old pagan Rome is already destroyed; nothing but traces of its former grandeur and power and glory are known. So papal Rome shall be destroyed. Even now the pope grieves and mourns for temporal supremacy, which, we think, has slipped away from his hands forever. There can scarcely be a doubt that if an attempt were made for its restoration to him, its population would rather see the old eternal city burned to the ground and perish than have it take place. Who can read the eighteenth chapter of Revelation without the im-

pression that at some future period, and it may be *near*, this will occur; and this city, like the ancient Babylon, be left a desolation upon the face of the earth? Balaam says, it will "perish forever." Ellicott, quoting Kiel, *in loco*, says: "The overthrow of this last power of the world, concerning which the prophet Daniel was the first to receive and proclaim new revelations, belongs to the end of the days, in which the Star out of Jacob is to rise as a bright and morning star."

"It is an interesting question for us to consider briefly: How did Balaam's prophecies come into the hands of the children of Israel? It is suggested that it is barely possible that he may have had communication with Moses, in the expectation of receiving from him the reward which he had failed to obtain from Balak, or, if captured, in the hope of saving his life."* But we would suggest, as still more probable, that they were carried about his person, and when he was slain they were recovered from his body. Of course all this is conjecture. We have no means of positively knowing how they were secured. No further light may ever be obtained concerning them; nor does this matter so much as the fact that we have them, and that they have shed so much light upon the past and present condition of the Church of God.

* Ellicott.

THE RESULTS OF BALAAM'S COUNSELS.

Chapter xxv, Verses 1-12.—Here is seen the consummation of Balaam's work against Israel. No doubt whatever can be entertained that all which is here recorded was in accordance with the advice and counsel which he gave to Balak. So we read in Rev. ii, 14: "Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." In other words, he must have said substantially to Balak: "I cannot curse Israel, but I will tell you how you can entrap them. Induce them to come to your feasts and to cohabit with your women; then they will be cursed indeed." So while they abode in Shittim the work of committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab was begun; they were called to their sacrifices, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. Now the work of ruin has commenced; now the results of his intrigues were made known. This god of the Moabites, to whom the Israelites were joined, was probably Chemosh, who was their god of war. Hence we see how this demoniacal act of Balaam had produced its legitimate results. The anger of the Lord was enkindled against them. And so he ordered that all the heads, or judges, of the people,

who had been the chief offenders in this matter, should be hung up before the Lord. This, as well as stoning, was the Hebrew method of punishment. The same word is used here, in the Septuagint, which is used in Heb. vi, 6, and is there translated "to put to an open shame." * But still this fearful work went on. Indeed, they seem to have lost all sense of modesty and shame. There is no sin which equals this for the destruction of all sense of shame. Right in the sight of Moses, and of all the congregation who were weeping before the Lord, an Israelite brings in a Midianitish woman into his tent for licentious purposes. This was the running over of the cup of iniquity; this was the height of their sin. And now it was that Phinehas, a ruler as well as a priest, a man of high authority, could bear this no longer. He rises up, seizes his javelin, goes after them into the tent, and thrusts them both through their vital parts in their guilty act. This stayed the plague which had broken forth among them. Even while it is thought the judges were derelict in their duty, the Psalmist says, "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed." *Psa. cvi, 30.* But fearful had been the ravages of that plague. Twenty-four thousand, the apostle says twenty-three thousand, fell in one day. The apparent discrepancy in numbers arises, probably, from the fact that a thousand had been put to death by the judges, besides those who fell under the plague. It is al-

ways thus when God arises to judgment; he smites terribly the transgressors of his law. Sometimes the Lord permits iniquity to reach its utmost limit, as in the case of slavery in this land; but when that point is reached there is no more room for forbearance. Then he smites, and the overflowings of his anger are fearful in the extreme. It may yet be so with intemperance and other evils which seem to demand the direct interference of the Lord for their removal.

It is well, also, to remember that the names of these guilty parties are preserved in remembrance as synonyms of the shamelessness of lust, and the fearful punishment which follows in its indulgence. Men and women were wild with its excitement and blinded and blurred in their conscience by its power, and in the face of heaven, in the very sight of the congregation of the saints, in the most fearful exposure to the most dreadful penalties, they rush on until overtaken by the storm of vengeance in which so soon they are sure to be utterly consumed.

Zimri and Cozbi are a duality of names which stand as a warning forever to all such persons.

THE RENUMBERING OF ISRAEL.

Chapter xxvi, Verses 1-65.—Nearly forty years before this Israel was numbered, as recorded in chapters first and second. Great changes had occurred since that period, great plagues had been inflicted upon them, and the decree for the overthrow of all who had rejected the report of Caleb and Joshua had been carried out. Now the significance of all of this was made known. This last plague had probably destroyed the remainder of this class of persons. The comparison in their numbers is of very deep interest. Some few of the tribes gained—as Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, and Asher—seven in all. The other tribes had lost—Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, and Naphtali. The former tribes had gained fifty-nine thousand two hundred; but the latter had lost more than was gained by them, namely, sixty-one thousand nine hundred. So that, on the whole, they were losers in population and strength; and after forty years they are one thousand eight hundred less than they were at that time. Another singular fact is the large gain to the tribe of Manasseh. This was twenty thousand five hundred. This tribe, originally, was one of the smallest, but now it rises, in proportions of

population, to one of the largest; while Ephraim was reduced, so that, from being one of the most numerous tribes, it now sinks among the least. Judah, as the representative of the Church of God, increased one thousand nine hundred. It was now made apparent that Jacob's prophecy had been fulfilled, namely, that Manasseh should excel Ephraim in numbers and in power, as he crossed his hands upon their heads, and foretold their future conditions. Numbers, in themselves, are small things in which to glory. They are very variable and changeful. Churches which are so boastful of numbers, and are ever repeating them, will in the end, we fear, seem small in the sight of God. We should always speak of them modestly and carefully, and never mention them in any other way than for the glory of our Master.

Another item of interest here is the reference to the fearful rebellion of Dathan and Abiram. Here it is said, ver. 10; "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. Notwithstanding *the children of Korah* died not." So it seems that Korah perished at the same time with Dathan and Abiram. The Samaritan Pentateuch has a different reading here. It transposes the two words, "and Korah," and combines them with the words "and the two hundred and fifty men," thus: "When the fire devoured Korah and the two hundred and fifty men." It is possible

that there may have been an omission in chap. xvi, 32: "All the men that appertained unto, or of words denoting all the goods belonging to." *

Yet, again, it seems that the tribe of Simeon decreased thirty-seven thousand. Let us remember this was the tribe to which Zimri belonged. Did he lead others of his tribe astray with him? Is it not a singular fact that upon this tribe no blessing was pronounced, and that in the allotment to the tribes the inheritance of Simeon was only the remnant of that which was assigned to the tribe of Judah? Josh. xix, 9.

Bishop Wordsworth observes here as follows: "When the Israelites were suffering persecution in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly (Exod. i, 7-20); but after their deliverance from Egypt they rebelled against God, and he consumed their days in vanity, and their years in trouble." And has this not always been true? The days of the Church's prosperity have been the days of her trial and persecution. But in prosperity she has become vain and haughty, presumptuous and indifferent, and then her decline has begun. O that this lesson may be written deeply upon the heart of the Churches of the present day! So many of them are yielding to the spirit of worldliness, indifference, and neglect, glorying in their numbers, their respectability, their wealth, and forgetting the only Rock whence their strength is derived.

But while disaster and death befell the thousands

* Ellicott.

of Israel, Caleb and Joshua were preserved. "Not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai," was found. "For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness." But these two men, who had been faithful among the faithless, obedient among the transgressors, and believing among the unbelieving were spared. God had promised this to them, and his promise was fulfilled before their eyes.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD.

Chapter xxvii, Verses 1-12.—It is interesting for us to see, so far back in the history of the world, the interest in, and deference paid to, woman. This has been the question of the ages: How shall we treat woman? What is her status in the social sphere? What is her place in the work of the Church? It is still an unanswered question. But we think in our day it is coming nearer to its full and final settlement. The recent session of a General Conference, in Methodist circles, and the action of women in temperance, in the missionary cause, on the platform, in the pulpit, and in other ways, is evidently drawing the matter to a conclusion, which, we think, should have been reached long ages ago. All efforts to exclude woman from her properly adjusted rights must fail. God is on her side, and his word is on her side. The efforts of some Churches to padlock their lips, to refuse them permission to say, even in the house of God, that Christ died for them, or to speak upon religious questions in the presence of their lords must come to an end.

Here, in this chapter, is a beautiful illustration of this whole question. These daughters of Zelophehad were five in number, and they had the courage to stand before Moses, nearly four thou-

sand years ago, and plead for *their rights*. But not only did they stand before Moses, but also before Eleazar, the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation. It required some courage to do this; but they felt and knew that they were right, and, consequently, they acted accordingly. There was nothing which their father had done which could possibly disinherit them. He was not in Korah's company, but died in his own sin. Some have supposed, and, indeed, it is a Jewish tradition, that he was the man who had been stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. But the more common understanding is, that he died as other men die, according to the course of nature or as the result of sin.

How beautiful it is to see how quickly the Lord returned an answer to Moses in this case: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right." Yes, and women in their intuitive judgments are oftener right than men are. No man who has an intelligent wife will dispute this. Times without number they will decide questions on the instant over which men will pore for hours. A witty French writer has said, that "when a man has toiled hard, step by step, up a flight of stairs, he will be sure to find a woman at the top; but she will not be able to tell how she got there. That, however, is of little moment, so long as she is there." It is always so in domestic and secular life; it is frequently so in religious matters. Well did Martin Luther say, that "the noblest thing God ever made on earth is

the heart of a right noble, loving woman." God has fixed the character and destiny of the true woman, and after the ages have passed away, ages which have witnessed the wrong done to her, she will yet find her true place. The idea that a woman who does the full work of a man shall only receive half his pay is preposterous. The idea that she is to be excluded from all counsel and governance in the Church and State must give way; and in both Church and State her power will be felt. It is a wonder that the keen eye of Bible-reading women has not earlier learned from this narrative of the daughters of Zelophehad its power as an illustration in their behalf. If women have souls, if they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, if they are saved, as their brothers, husbands, and fathers are, by faith, why should they not have their rights? why should they not be equal with them in the Church and in the State?

Verses 12-23.—Is it not astonishing that, right in connection with the adjustment of the rights of the daughters of Zelophehad to an inheritance in the land of Canaan, Moses himself records his exclusion from that land? Yet he does it boldly and bravely. "The mountains of Abarim form the Moabitish table-land, the northern portion of which bore the name of Pisgah. It is here that we must look for Mt. Nebo, which is sometimes described as one of the mountains of Abarim (Deut. xxxii, 49), and at other times as the top of Pisgah." * Deut.

* Ellicott.

iii, 27; xxxiv, 1. Moses was the representative of *the law*; and the law could not bring men to perfection, nor to heaven. "The law," says Bishop Wordsworth, "led men to see the promises afar off and to embrace them, to see and greet the promises from afar, and it brought them to the borders of Canaan, but could not bring them into it; that was reserved for Joshua, the type of Jesus." It seems, therefore, only right and proper that Moses should be excluded, and that Joshua, the representative of Christ, should have the honor of bringing them in. God never conceals men's faults from their eyes, nor from the eyes of the world; and hence Moses, his friend, to whom he had spoken face to face, as to no other man, is rebuked, because "ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes."

The whole history of this transaction is familiar to every reader of the Bible, and needs not to be repeated here. And now from Pisgah's summit he was to see the goodly land, even Lebanon. Whether he saw all its borders is questionable; but very probably the whole passed before his eyes in a sort of panoramic vision. And when he had seen it, looming up in its brightness and beauty before his eyes; when he saw how near God's promise was to its fulfillment, then he was to pass away into the heavens; then he was to be gathered unto his people, as Aaron was. The fact of his death is here beautifully expressed: "He was to be gathered to his people."

There was no deep, dark river for him to cross; no chilly, icy waves for him to pass through; no dark and dreamy shadows for him to endure. No; simply, he was to be "gathered to his people." How beautifully at last he must have passed away! The Jewish writers say that "God kissed his spirit away." No doubt angels were near him at that time, as they were at the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, and fanned him with their wings and escorted him to his eternal home. There can be no doubt that he is there. After fifteen hundred years had passed away he re-appeared with Elijah and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and communed with Christ concerning "his decease which he should accomplish in Jerusalem." It is said that the whole heavenly host sing the "song of Moses . . . and of the Lamb." But yet no man knows where his body lies, or where is the place of his sepulcher. Away down in some one of the gorges of Abarim "angels dug his grave and God buried him." He was one of the greatest, mightiest, and best men that the good and great God ever made. His name is more widely known to-day than the name of Alexander, or Cæsar, or Charlemagne, or Bonaparte or Wellington, or any other of the world's great and good men. Moses, Christ, and Paul are a trinity of names the world will always remember and can never lose sight of.

Is it not remarkable here that he expresses no concern for himself nor for his family? His great desire is that "the Lord, the God of the spirits

of all flesh, should set a man over the congregation that they be not as sheep without a shepherd." No wonder that he was anxious about his successor in office. Here is an utter absence of all self-seeking. He does not plead for a member of his own family to succeed him, not even for his own son, as many others have done; but he commits it all into the hands of God: Let the Lord appoint the man; he knows best who the man is who shall succeed me. There is no outburst of grief; no remorseful words; his mind is fixed upon his people. His great desire is that the Lord will appoint a true shepherd for his flock. God always has his instruments ready for his work. He calls them to the work he has for them to do, and he fits them for it; for he is "the Lord, the God of the *spirits* of all flesh." How remarkably does Moses here indicate the great fact of man's spiritual nature. Man is not merely material or physical, but he is also a spirit, an immortal spirit, which allies him to God, his Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. It is this spirit which dignifies and exalts him in the sight of God and of angels, of men and of demons. The Lord, who is himself a Spirit, has made man a spirit like himself. Therefore he knows best how to judge the qualifications, the aptitudes, and faculties of men for the positions he would have them occupy. So Moses's request is at once granted. Joshua, long trained; Joshua, who had led Israel in triumph against Amalek and prevailed; Joshua, who had

gone up with the spies to the land of promise and brought back with Caleb a good report; Joshua, who had survived while a whole generation had passed away; Joshua, now eighty-six years old, a prince and a mighty warrior, was chosen for this high honor. Nor is there any wonder at this choice. He was a mighty man, a courageous man, a mighty prince, and a great warrior; but more than all this—above all this—he was a *type and a representative of Christ*. Moses was a type of his prophetic and mediatorial character; but Joshua was a type of his salvation. His very name, indeed, is that of Saviour or deliverer. Jesus is our Joshua. He is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;” he can bring us into the Canaan-land, the land of perfect love on earth; and he can bring us safely into his heavenly kingdom at last. Joshua was formally set apart for his work by the laying on of hands. Christ, our Deliverer and Redeemer, was anointed to be a Prince and a Saviour; the Prophet and the King of this people. So God works. As generation after generation passes away, he is ready with his instruments to see that his work is carried on. And this mighty Joshua, whom he hath anointed, will not “fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

THE LAW OF SACRIFICE.

Chapter xxviii, Verses 1-31.—It is generally supposed that for nearly thirty-eight years the offering of sacrifices was largely suspended. Bishop Patrick conjectures that the lamb was offered daily, morning and evening, and doubled on the Sabbath day. But of this we do not know. Amos, in his prophecy, says: "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" This was quoted by Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrin. From this it is implied that they did not. Ibn Ezra quotes the sixth verse as a proof that the "Israelites ceased to offer burnt sacrifices after they left the encampment at Sinai throughout the time of their wanderings in the wilderness."

But now the law is re-enacted, and its observance re-enforced. They were soon to enter upon a series of military engagements. They must not forget them on this account. Then, also, they were to enter Canaan, where the observance of this law must be continued through the centuries. And so, while enjoying the land which God was to give them, they were not to forget the giver, but to remember his mercy toward them. Yet another thought here: these sacrifices were all typical of

the coming Redeemer, who was to make his appearance in this land, and they were never to be omitted until he should come. In verse 2 they are also forcibly reminded that what they were to offer to God of right belonged to him already. It was "*My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire.*" True, they were to offer these sacrifices through the appointed priesthood; but they were to recognize the fact that what they offered belonged already to God. His are not only the "silver and gold," but also "the cattle upon a thousand hills." "The word *korban* is a general word for an oblation. It may denote in this place the *minchah*, or "meal-offering," or the "show-bread offerings" which were directly connected with a settled life in Canaan rather than with a nomadic life in the wilderness.*

The daily offering of a lamb, morning and evening, was one of the most striking types of Christ as the Lamb of God offered under the law. The wine offered was to be of the strong kind; it was not to be drunk, but to be poured forth upon the altar. Ainsworth says: "The wine must be strong, because it was a figure of the blood of Christ, the memorial of which, as it is left to the Church now, is wine; and of the blood of the martyrs, which was poured out as a drink-offering "upon the sacrifice and service of your faith." Phil. ii, 17. We find here, also, another distinct recognition of the Sabbath, as well as the duty of its faithful observance. On that

* Ellicott.

day the sacrifices were to be doubled, indicating to us that on that day our services are to be multiplied and our duties enlarged. The Sabbath belongs to God, and is to be employed only in his service.

As to the new moons various theories have been presented as to their observance. Of course, they were observed, and with increasing interest as the centuries passed away. But the question will arise, Why was all this? Some think it was a recognition of divine providence; others of divine mercy. Some have thought that the observance looked back to the creation, when God "appointed the moon for seasons." "Astronomy tells us of the influence of the moon upon the earth and the sea. It is an indispensable part of our solar system, and an inseparable companion of our rolling earth. And while we may not always be able to tell why it is so, yet we all know the pleasure which it gives us when we see the clear-cut new crescent of the moon, and especially with many if they could see it over their right shoulder." But God doubtless has reasons for this requirement which he has not fully revealed to us. Hence with blowing of trumpets, with the suspension of business, and the offering of sacrifices, this event was sure to be observed. There comes to us here, also, the re-enactment of the law relating to the passover. Ver. 16. There can be no doubt that this law had not been observed during the thirty-eight years of their wilderness life and sojournings. But now it is proclaimed

anew, and several particulars are added to the law as first announced in Exod. xii, 16. The first and last of the seven days were to be sanctified as Sabbaths by a holy rest and a holy convocation; and besides this during the seven days their sacrifices were to be multiplied in token of their gratitude for their deliverance. In 1 Cor. v, 7 Christ is called "our passover;" and in connection with him we are called upon to "keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

There is also here proclaimed the *feast of Pentecost*. To the Christian Church this is a memorable day. The day on which the Spirit of the Lord descended, according to the promise of our heaven-ascended Lord, and three thousand souls were converted to Christ. These were the first-fruits of the Christian Church offered to the Lord on the first day of its formal inauguration. And it is in this way that the Old and New Testaments and covenants fit into each other, are dove-tailed together, so that it would be impossible for us to understand the one without the other. Who could understand Christianity without the feasts of passover and Pentecost? Who could fully understand Christ's sacrifice without the great law of sacrifices contained in this chapter, and in the books of Moses? But here is a perfect interlocking of symbol and reality, type and antitype, form and power, shadow and salvation. And in this way we are ever reading

the one with the other, and explaining the one by the other. And so we find so much of the Gospel foreshadowed in this book, which already we have been able to find. There is yet more to follow.

There is nothing which the Church needs now so much as more Pentecosts. They are the sources of its glory, its power, and its successes. There can be nothing done efficiently without them; with them the world will soon be ablaze with light and aflame with glory.

“Lord God, the Holy Ghost!
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all thy power.”

THE BLOWING OF THE SILVER TRUMPETS.

Chapter xxix, Verse 1.—This seventh month was the period, above all others, for religious observances and solemnities. This was so for two reasons: It was the first month of Israel's deliverance from Egypt; it was the period between the harvest and seed-time, when they had the most leisure to attend upon religious services. This blowing of trumpets mentioned here occurred at every new moon; but this first day of the seventh month was emphatically the day for the blowing of trumpets, which, according to Jewish writers, was continued from sunrise to sunset. "The word trumpets is not expressed either in Lev. xxiii, 24 or in this place; and in Psa. lxxxi, 3, which is used in the feast of trumpets in the modern Jewish services, the word used is *shophar*, a word which is interchanged with *keren* ("the cornet, or ram's horn"); not *hazozerah*, the straight silver trumpet mentioned in chap. x, 2. The word *teruah*, which is here rendered "blowing the trumpets," is coupled with *shophar* in Lev. xxv, 9, "the trumpet of loud clang, or joyful sound." *

This is a beautiful emblem of the trumpet of the

Gospel: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." It is the sound of mercy to the nations, to all who are in bondage for their sins, or disinherited on account of them; it is to all ransomed sinners, that they may hear the joyful news of heavenly grace. This gospel trumpet has been sounding among the nations for many centuries, reverberating through all the hills and valleys, bursting with joy over land and sea. And never did it sound so far and so wide as it does now; never did such multitudes hear it. And so it will continue to sound until the world is filled with its heavenly music. Here are presented two occasions for the use of those trumpets: first, there was a period for the afflicting of their souls, and second, in the feast of holy joy in the tabernacle.

The feast of atonement has been observed by the Jews in all ages; and although no sacrifices are now offered, still all over the world this period is observed. All business is suspended, and at least an outward mourning is apparent. It is always solemnizing in its effects, when this day occurs, to see stores and factories in all our large cities closed, and a solemn awe worn upon the countenances of all the Jewish people. These multiplied offerings all point to Christ; all tell of the one great sacrifice which he offered on Calvary for the sins of the world.

Verses 12-40.—On the fifteenth day of this month another holy convocation was held. Then seventy oxen were sacrificed during the seven days of the feast, two rams and fourteen lambs were offered

daily as burnt-offerings, and a he-goat as a sin-offering. This large number was offered from the consideration that at this feast the people evinced their gratitude, not only for the divine favor and protection, but also for the rich fruits of the harvest so recently gathered. It was on this day, the last day of the feast, that Jesus, the great Saviour, the great Sacrifice for sins, stood and cried to the weary, thirsting ones around him, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." And not only did he proclaim his great sufficiency, but also that of the Spirit which should come forth after his glorification. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." How wonderfully law and Gospel blend! Here in this chapter we read of numerous sacrifices, with meat-offerings and drink-offerings, all pointing to Christ. But in the Gospel we read of only one Sacrifice, one Saviour, one Fountain of Blood to which all can come; all can wash away their sins, and all can be saved. All may drink the living waters and never thirst again. But in the Gospel as well as in the law the mourning comes before the rejoicing, and Sinai comes before Calvary. Days and nights of weeping always come before days of delight and joy. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning." "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

V O W S.

Chapter xxx, Verses 1-16.—To vow means to give, dedicate, or consecrate to God by solemn promise. Such vows are frequently made. There are two kinds of vow spoken of in verse 2; namely, the *neder*, which denotes, primarily, a positive vow, or a vow of performance, and the *issar*, which denotes a negative vow, or a vow of abstinence. In all ages, among all people, and in all religions, such vows have been uttered, at times with solemnity, and in other instances thoughtlessly and recklessly. Religious vows are more common than others; and yet men and women will vow on very small occasions and for very small purposes. Very many are often entirely indifferent as to the performance of their vows. We oftener read of vows in the Old Testament than in the New. Jacob, when he went to Mesopotamia, vowed to God the tenth of his estate, and promised to offer it at Bethel to the honor and service of God. Gen. xxviii, 20-22. The mother of Samuel vowed that he should be consecrated to God, and then be offered up to serve in the tabernacle. When these vows were made under the law, it was enjoined that they should be strictly and faithfully observed. Hence Moses says: "When thou shalt vow a vow

unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee." Again he says: "If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee." Deut. xxiii, 21, 22. It was to be distinctly understood that the man or the woman, when they vowed, did so voluntarily. They were under no obligations to make the vow; but when it was once made they must surely keep it. And yet there were limitations even to this. The children of Israel had been in the weary desert for a long time; but now they were coming into Canaan. The change would be very great. They had been in a desert of want, weariness, and woe; now they were coming into a land of corn and wine and oil, and favored with every blessing. Under these circumstances they might be inclined freely and fully to express their gratitude to God by frequent, and perhaps sometimes by impracticable, vows. The Lord therefore condescends to show them his will concerning this matter. Hence he says, in verse 2, "He shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." This teaches the sacredness and binding character of the vow. So the wise man says: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Eccl. v, 4, 5.

There are presented to us here four exceptions to

this general law: (1) A woman still in her father's house and still unmarried; (2) a woman who when making the vow is unmarried, but who marries before the vow is performed; (3) a widow or divorced person must surely keep her vows; (4) the vow of a married woman. Now, if when the father heard the vow of his daughter he remained silent, the vow would be confirmed, for at the time he had the power to disannul it. But in that event the Lord would forgive the daughter, and she would not be held responsible for its performance. The case of a woman who is married while under a vow: if the husband chosen heard her vow and held his peace then the bond stood, and her vow must be performed. So in the case of a married woman, if her husband disallowed the vow when she made it her vow was not to stand; her husband has made it void, and the Lord shall forgive her. So the Lord clearly recognizes the relation of the father and the husband. God would not interfere in such matters with these family relations. Both the father and the husband, then, had the power to nullify a vow.

In the gospel dispensation all Christians vow to be the Lord's. In the baptismal covenant the most solemn vows are taken. What a pity that so many seem to forget them! Then there are many who will make vows to abstain from sin, or to measure up to duty, or privilege, or to give toward certain benevolences, or to assume certain responsibilities. When such vows are voluntarily made they cannot be disannulled without occasioning the dis-

pleasure of God, unless, in the developments of the future, or by losses in business, or by changes, there comes an absolute inability to perform the promise made. We often sing, when uttering our vows of consecration,

“ High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.”

But no one should take upon himself such a vow unless in making it he has exercised the greatest thoughtfulness and care ; and when it is made, it should be done with the utmost solemnity and humility. It should be written upon the soul as with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, and never be forgotten. O how many such vows have been broken ! How much we need forgiveness at the hand of our heavenly Father for these broken vows ! Lord, have mercy upon us !

ISRAEL'S VICTORY—THE MIDIANITES DESTROYED.

Chapter xxxi, Verses 1-8.—The justice of God is absolute and equal. He had punished his own people severely for sinning against him, through the temptations of the women of Midian. Now he punishes their tempters and deceivers. His hand smites sins unrepented of, both among his own people and among his enemies. It is probable, if they had surrendered to his people the men and the women who had been guilty of the idolatry and adultery, most probably at the suggestion of Balaam, that they would have been satisfied, and the Lord's anger might have been turned away from them. But this they failed to do, as Benjamin did in the after years, and so there was nothing left for them but to slay and destroy them. It has been supposed, further, that as Midian was descended from Abraham, they had more light than the surrounding peoples, knew more of God and of their obligations to him than the Moabites, and so were more responsible in his sight. However this may be, we know that God does all things right; he never makes any mistakes. Suppose that there were no Bible, and no moral law, and that under such conditions a record had been made of these transactions, would it have been in

the facts mentioned as it is now? Have not other nations which have not recognized God committed greater offenses? The guilt of Midian was great. They had enticed Israel away from the living and true God, and had buried its people in a festering mass of lasciviousness, offensive to High Heaven, and certainly they deserved the severest punishment. And such punishment was meted out to them. We are not, however, to understand that all the Midianites were slain; it was only those with whom they warred and with whom they had come in contact. Some persons may find especial fault with the slaughter of their women. But they were the occasion of the whole trouble; they were the ones who had done the mischief, and who, had they been spared, would have been likely to add iniquity to sin. Hence the command was to slay all these women. The law commanded that both the adulterer and adulteress should be slain. The adulterers had been slain in Israel; now the adulteresses were slain in Midian.

Many have wondered why the name of Joshua is not mentioned in this part of the history. Perhaps the complete history is not known; but the following considerations have been presented: Phinchas was the one who had slain the guilty Israelite and his Midianitish paramour, and it seemed proper that he should have great prominence in the destruction of these enemies of the Lord. Then there were only a thousand selected from each tribe, and probably they each selected their own leader and

fought under the direction of Phinehas, as he received counsel from the Lord. He took with him the holy instruments, perhaps the Urim and Thummim, and the silver trumpets; although not yet the high-priest, yet this honor was conferred upon him. Having been faithful to his God, he is now rewarded in this distinguished manner.

Another matter of interest here is, that Moses was now doing his last work. This was the last battle which occurred under his administration; after this he was to lay down his long-worn honors, and to enter into the heavenly Canaan, where he would be forever at rest. From this work he would go to his account, and from it he would go to his rest; and so he would be especially anxious to do every thing according to the divine command. In like manner there comes to all the soldiers of the Lord, in all dispensations, a cessation of labor and toil. It cannot be far away from the devoted child of God and the earnest laborer in his service. How important that we should be doing our work well, so that we may glorify God and finish the work of life which he has given us to do.

Verse 8.—This chapter, so full of thrilling incidents, records also *the death of Balaam*. This lover of "the wages of unrighteousness," whose iniquity was rebuked by the poor dumb ass speaking with man's voice, was met on the field of battle and slain. At one period he seemed imploringly desirous that he might die the death of the righteous; but he is now slain in his unpardoned guilt with the wicked,

meeting at the last most justly what was his due. His iniquity was great ; his wiles were those of the Midianites, and his sin greater than their own. Some think, also, that his accurate knowledge of Israel, and his general knowledge of Israel's God, made him more guilty than they were. There are not a few who think that the words in the prophet Mic. vi, 8 are addressed by Balaam to Balak : " He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? " His prophecies certainly were of a high character, and uttered in most beautiful words. But his ambition, his love of money, his desire for honor and preferment overcame him, and he sank so far as to be a warning to all the ages of the future ; and in the end he fell by the sword of Israel. God's enemies of every age and place, who have plotted against his people, shall also perish.

But not only was Amalek destroyed, but also all his cities. These cities had been intensely idolatrous, and their idolatry was of the most unblushing and lascivious character. They were smirched all over with lust. As the Midianites were a nomadic people it is probable that they did not build the cities in which they dwelt ; they had been conquered by them, and they and their lords dwelt in them. In like manner Christ has said, " Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." All cities, palaces, and castles where sin has reigned must be consumed.

God's vengeance moves slowly, but it moves surely ; and sooner or later it will come forth in fearful forms. This is equally true in this Christian dispensation. When God draws blood he knows well which vein to strike.

Verses 12-25.—We cannot forbear noticing the manner in which the victorious troops were received. Moses in his advanced age and his nearness to eternity, and “Eleazar, the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.” How solemn, and yet how grand was this reception ! It is true that Moses was wroth ; the triumphant army had not done *all* the work which it had been commanded to do ; but, after all, they had achieved a great victory, and glorious results were to outflow from it. How wonderful it is that the Master will say to any one in the last day, when he comes forth with all his holy angels to welcome his redeemed ones, “Well done, good and faithful servant ; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” There are so many things which have been done by us that we should not have done, and so many things left unperformed which we should have done, that it will be a wonder of wonders to every redeemed soul to be thus addressed by his divine Lord. But so it will be. Blessed be his holy name forever !

Verses 32-48.—Great was their booty, and largely were they enriched by the prey of their enemies. The whole booty consisted of 32,000 maidens, 675,000 small cattle, 72,000 oxen, 61,000 asses.

The heave-offering which belonged to the Lord was one five hundredth part of the maidens and the cattle which had fallen to their share. And after this there fell to their share 16,000 maidens, 337,500 sheep and goats, 36,000 oxen, 30,500 asses. Of these the priests had 32 maidens, 675 sheep and goats, 72 oxen, 61 asses; and the Levites had 320 maidens, 6,750 sheep and goats, 720 oxen, and 610 asses. And yet, after all their victories and spoils, they had not lost a single man. How wonderfully God can preserve his people! Only twelve thousand men, and yet not one slain! Was there ever such a battle? How true it is that while we are in the Lord's hands we are just as safe as if we were in heaven!

Verses 48-54.—We make only one more notice of this victory, and that is to record *their sense of gratitude*. When they returned after the battle, and the muster-roll was called, and they found that not one of their number was lost or missing, their gratitude to their Deliverer was great and demanded expression. They not only wanted to express this with their lips, but also with their gifts. The plunder, as we have seen, was very large, and from that they now wished to offer a special oblation to the Lord. So they offered of the gold sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels which they had taken from the captains and from those who were slain. This accords well with the statements of historians and travelers of the well-known habits of the women of heathen tribes. The peculiar affec-

tion of the Midianites for such ornamentation is further shown in the account which is contained in Judg. viii, 26 of the weight of the golden ear-rings which were given to Gideon after his victory over that nation.* We should also always show our gratitude to our heavenly Father for signal deliverances wrought out for us. Truly, they are many, and they are very great and often very marked. How should we, in our contributions, our prayers and praises, our testimonies and consecrations, evince our hearty thanksgivings! God is always well pleased with such gifts as recognize our dependence upon him and our sense of obligation to him. The day of our return from the field of battle is near, and not one of the Lord's true followers will ever be found to have perished. O what rejoicing and thanksgiving will then swell up from the hearts and harps of the redeemed ones! For ever and ever will we praise thee, O Lord, for thy matchless mercy and thy keeping power! Amen!

* Ellicott.

RESTING THIS SIDE OF THE JORDAN.

Chapter xxxii, Verses 1-5.—The land on the east side of the Jordan, which was now conquered, was a fertile and beautiful country. Jazer was remarkable for its rich and abundant pastures, and so was the land of Gilead. Even now amid its desolations it shows clearly how rich and fertile it was. It lay north and south of the brook Jabbok, and is often spoken of in the word of God. It was this beautiful region which was shown to Moses before he closed his eyes upon earthly scenes and awoke among the blessed. It was this land which was promised to Jephthah if he would become the leader of its people. And here Abner set up Ishbosheth as king after the death of Saul. It was here that, when rebellion raged against the house of David, Absalom and Israel fought the battle which resulted in his complete discomfiture and in the triumph of Israel. It was the birthplace of Elijah the Tishbite. The bride of the Lamb is represented as having her locks as a flock of goats from Gilead. It was also famous for its balm. Hence the question of the prophet Jeremiah: "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

It was no wonder, therefore, that Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh were so attracted by its loveliness and beauty and its seeming adaptation to the wants of their tribes. There was also much of selfishness and covetousness manifested in their request. We think it is evident that, at first, they had no idea of going over the Jordan. They did not, indeed, want to go over. Therefore they said, "Bring us not over Jordan." It was only the very severe rebuff which their application received from Moses which wakened them out of their wild dream, so that after they had consulted together they promised to go over before their brethren, ready armed, and not to return until they saw them safely settled in Canaan.

How clearly does this illustrate the spiritual condition of many persons in the Christian Church at the present day! They are unwilling to go over Jordan to the promised land of perfect love. They want to remain and rest on this side. We are never to forget that the Jordan represents primarily the dividing line between the fullness of the Christian life and the worldly minded, unbelieving, and disobedient part of God's people, or those who are professedly such. And Canaan is emblematical, not of heaven, but of perfect love and fullness of life in Christ Jesus. How true it is that a large part of the Church desires to remain away from its privileges, is satisfied with worldly conditions and prospects, is contented to remain in a low state of religious fervor and life, if, indeed, it has *any* of that

religious life at all. But, however rich Jazer and Gilead were, the land over the Jordan was richer still and more highly favored. Is it not wonderful, then, that with such a land before them, rising up in brightness and beauty before their eyes,

"A land of corn and wine and oil."

so few appreciate their privilege, or march up to its possession and enjoyment. They prefer the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," to the richer, broader, purer joys which Christ gives to the fully saved soul. What a fullness many would enjoy if they would only measure up to their privilege! But Satan and the world blind their eyes, and they stop short of their inheritance. The apostle, in his letter to the Hebrews, clearly says that their non-entrance into Canaan was the result of unbelief. If this were so with Israel, surely it is so with multitudes of persons in the Christian Church, both in her ministry and in her membership. It must be said that they enter not into this spiritual Canaan *because of unbelief*. They prefer earthly things to Christ, and worldly pleasures to the abounding joys of full salvation. In this way they voluntarily separate themselves by the broad line of a Jordan from the more highly favored, the more abundantly secure, and more richly experienced child of God, and the rich ordinances of his Church, for the sake of ministering to their own pleasures and sensual gratifications. Nor did they consider their danger. The tribes of Reu-

ben and Gad and Manasseh were among the first which in future ages were taken captive by the king of Assyria. 1 Chron. v, 26. O how easily when danger comes are such persons captured by their foes! The tempter and the destroyer have a double power over them, and they are in a condition of utter defenselessness. In this condition how many fall! Would it be saying too much to add, how many perish!

We trust that the day is not far distant when the whole Church will say:

“O that we might at once go up,
No more on this side Jordan stop,
 But now the land possess;
 This moment end our legal years,
 Sorrows and sins and doubts and fears,
 A howling wilderness.”

We should “fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” How beautiful it is to see, right here in the midst of this selfish and unbelieving people, a recognition of the men who “wholly followed the Lord.” Faithful Caleb and Joshua will never be forgotten. Their names stand forth illustrious as stars of the first magnitude, because they believed God’s promise, and said, “We are fully able to go up and possess the land.” O for more Calebs and Joshuas at the present day, who will take God at his word, and who will be reckoned among the immortals! It is astonishing to see with what persistency they cling to the thought.

Verse 19.—"We will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward." They voluntarily give up all claim to any place on the west side if they only can remain on the east. And so, when their petition was granted, they went to work rebuilding or repairing the cities which had been wasted. They certainly had no time for *rebuilding* those cities now. They only wanted to make them tenantable for themselves and their families and their flocks. "It was at Dibon, one of the cities now repaired, that the Moabite stone was discovered by Mr. Klein in 1868."* Here these two tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh settled down for the space of about seven hundred years; from 1452 B. C. to 721 B. C. Then they with the other tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity, and they have never been distinguished as separate tribes since that date. Will they ever be known again?

* Ellicott.

THAT ZIGZAG JOURNEY.

Chapter xxxiii, Verses 1-50.—It would seem that the Lord had commanded Moses to keep an account of the journeys of the peoples, a sort of diary, recording each station on the way. These journeys were not so long; but what principally characterized them was their crookedness, their zigzag course. They might have reached Canaan in a brief time had they fully believed and obeyed the Lord; but unbelief and disobedience made their journeys through the wilderness long and tedious. In three short months they could easily have reached Canaan from Egypt, with all their flocks and herds and all that they possessed; but they were forty long years in their journeys thitherward. Nor did they dwell very long in one place. The pillar of cloud and of fire was ever directing them to a change in the place of their encampment. Perhaps they made only an average stay of about a year in one place; and this was all the rest they were permitted to have. How truly do these facts illustrate the Christian's character and course! How many after their conversion never seem to push on or to march right forward into Canaan! In many instances they begin at once to decline, or if they move at all in a forward direction it is by cir-

cuitous, irregular, and inconstant ways. Look for a moment at a map of these journeys, and you will not doubt the heading of this chapter. See the course which they pursued. We smile at their irregularity; and yet, let us look at our own course. If we do so, we shall see clearly how wondrously exact are these illustrations of our spiritual career and journeyings. Take up your journal, the diary of your Christian life, and mark its frequent change in tone and in experience. Another thought must be mentioned here. All these years were spent in the desert. And yet that desert life was not entirely spent without God's presence and his watchful care. Still they had "the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night;" still they had the manna wherever they went, and the waters of the smitten rock followed them in all their journeys. But, after all, this was not Canaan; this was not their rest.

It is even so in the life of God's people under the gospel dispensation. While many do not move forward, do not seem to grow in grace or advance in holiness, yet they are not what they once were. They now enjoy communion with saints, occasional manifestations of the divine favor, and visitations of divine grace; and they are still, as they say and as they hope, on their way to heaven. But how often they complain of their "crooked ways," their irregular steps, and their backslidings from the Lord! And how many griefs and sorrows and tears are theirs oftentimes because of their wanderings!

It is well for us to survey this course of Israel. There were many sad occasions through which they passed, as at Kibroth Hattaavah, the graves of lust. What a history was connected with this locality! Shittim is the place where they sinned in the matter of Peor. Abel, which signifies mourning, was the place where they mourned. Rephidim is the place where they wanted water, "and there was no water for the people to drink." Mt. Hor, where Aaron, the priest of the Lord, went up at the commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after they came out from the land of Egypt, and in the one hundred and twenty-third year of his age.

But, after all, there were pleasant and beautiful places. There were the waters of Elim and its palm-trees. They had come directly from the bitter waters of Marah, sweetened by the providence of God, to Elim, where were twelve fountains of sweet water; and they pitched there.

"The hills about Elim are several hundred feet high. The oasis seems charming to one after having traveled over the dead desert for several years. Groves of palm-trees, acacia, juniper, tamarisk, and colocynth abound; and among the hills is one living, bubbling spring from which we drank and took a fresh supply of sweet water. Elim is a lovely spot, the clear waters and shade-giving palms of which delight the traveler. There is another Elim, but it is only a damp spot, scarcely worth mentioning; while this is an extensive oasis, and has a tiny

stream running through it out into the wady and thence to the sea. Our unanimous vote was according to the traditions, in believing that all the honors of *the* Elim belonged to the last-mentioned oasis." * Yes, even in the midst of all the dark and troubled wilderness, the camp by Elim could never be forgotten. These twelve fountains of water are still bubbling up before the eye of the Church, and tell of God's care and Israel's comfort. So in our Christian life, in the midst of sorrow and care, of trial and temptation we are often brought to places full of comfort and blessing, where our joys abound and our souls are greatly refreshed. Will it not be wonderful, when we reach our heavenly home, to look back over our life-time here on the earth? How we shall be humbled before the throne at the crookedness, the missteps of our way; and how we shall rejoice at the mercy of the Lord, which brought us on through all, bore with us through all, was unwilling that we should perish, and finally enabled us to reach the heavenly city. And when we shall see further, how he cared for us all the while, how he prevented our ruin, how he kept us when we were just on the point to die, new songs will burst from our ransomed souls, new joys will thrill them for ever and ever.

Perhaps we should refer here to the apparent differences in the account with those mentioned in Exodus and Deuteronomy. For instance, there is no mention in Exodus of the station at the Red

* Edward Wilson, *The Century*, July, 1888.

Sea, and of the stations at Dophkah and Alush. Vers. 12, 13. Ellicott thinks that Rithmah (ver. 18) is the same place as Kadesh, for the following reasons: "The Wady Retemat is not far distant from Kadesh, and, according to Robinson, it abounds with the Retem, or broom, and near it there is a copious stream of water called Ain el Kudeirat; it seems reasonable to infer that this encampment is the same." And he says further, "If this be so, it is reasonable to conclude that the seventeen places of encampment, in verses 19-36, between Rithmah and Kadesh, are those at which the Israelites pitched their camps during the thirty-eight years of their wandering in the wilderness." Other differences are also presented; for instance, verse 45, "From Iim, or Ije-Abarim to Dibon Gad." In chapter xxi, 11-20, seven places are named, but here are only three, and the names are different. But in all these differences it must be borne in mind that Israel was a great people, nearly three millions in number, and they, consequently, occupied a vast territory, covering different localities, with different names, some of which have now perished.

While, however, these small and only seemingly apparent discrepancies exist as to their encampment, there is no misunderstanding as to the requirements of God upon them, in the destruction of "all their pictures, . . . their molten images, and . . . all high places." Had they only obeyed these divine commands how much they would have been saved from! But they did not do it, and what evils

came upon them ! Nor were they left without warning in this matter ; for the Lord assured them that unless they did this, the people would be as “pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.” Not only so ; they were assured that the same punishments which were to be inflicted upon the Canaanites would come upon them. Ver. 56. How fearfully they realized all these things in their future history ! And is it not so with those who hold on to any of the ways of sin and iniquity ? What suffering many have thus endured ! What reason have we to cry—

“O may I still from sin depart ;
A wise and understanding heart,
Jesus, to me be given :
And let me through thy Spirit know
To glorify my God below,
And find my way to heaven.”

THE DIVISION OF THE INHERITANCE.

Chapter xxxiv, Verses 1-15.—The long journey through the wilderness is now almost over, and the land of Canaan begins to rise up in beauty before the eyes of the children of Israel. Already arrangements are being made for the partitioning of this inheritance, which is not large, but which is very lovely. For it was a goodly land; a land flowing with milk and honey; a land of amazing productiveness and fruitfulness. There every tribe and every person was assured of some portion, excepting the portions already awarded on the east side of the Jordan to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. The boundaries of this line were clearly fixed, and they were only to strive for this land. No aggressive wars were to be made upon surrounding nations beyond the confines of this land. Ultimately, their borders might extend to the great river Euphrates; but the boundaries here-in described only encompassed the land of Canaan. Only here were they to engage in war; only here were their victories to be enjoyed.

These nations or tribes in this land were overgrown in wickedness and corruption, and they *must* be destroyed. It looked, indeed, like a very small inheritance for so many people; but, after all, it

was all-sufficient for them. It was only about one hundred and twenty miles long and forty miles broad for nine tribes and the half of a tribe of people to find a home in. Even when their population grew to five or six millions of souls, while they were faithful to God they knew no famine, they felt no want. But it was in this little land for ages where the true God only was known, and where his worship was enjoyed. It was the Lord's vineyard, fenced in and guarded and protected by his presence and power. Surrounded by desert and sea, hidden away as it were, geographically, in the very heart or center of this world, it was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and ultimately given to their descendants forever. The eyes of the Lord have always been upon it, and it has been, in fact, preserved almost entirely for the future abode of his people.

A few explanations of these boundaries may be necessary. Southward from the southern point of the Dead Sea, as far as the height of Akrabbim, is a row of white cliffs which run obliquely across the Arabah, at a distance of about eight miles from the Dead Sea. Kadesh Barnea was at the western extremity of the desert of Zin. Southerly the boundary line ran along the valleys, which form a natural division between the cultivated land and the desert, from the Arabah on the east to the Mediterranean on the west, forming the western boundary until it reached the sea. Northerly, Mt. Hor; some say Mt. Hermon, but this is too far

eastward. Von Raumer thinks it was probably one of the peaks belonging to the Lebanon range, and discernible from Sidon.* Easterly, it was from Hazar-enan to Shephan, and from Shephan to Riblan, on the east side of Ain. This Ain, a fountain, is supposed to refer to the great fountain of Neba-Anjar, at the foot of Anti-Libanus. The Sea of Chinnereth was the name of a district or city, as well as of the Lake of Galilee. In later times the city was called Genusa, or Gennesaret, as in the gospels. Luke v, 1. Look now, for a moment, at these borders.

There was the River of Egypt, and this would ever remind them of their cruel bondage in that land. Another border was the Salt, or Dead Sea, an everlasting remembrance of the fire-storm which swept over the devoted cities of the plain, causing them to sink to fathomless depths, and so impregnating its waters with bitumen that it could scarcely be stirred by any wind or bear any vessels, or be replenished with fishes, or have any living creature come near it. Thus they were warned against the sins which caused this great calamity. Then there was the Wilderness of Sin, hugging them in closely on their southern border. And, finally, the great sea, the Mediterranean, the only seeming outlet to the great world beyond which was given to this land. It was an outlet through which all the world could be reached.

Verses 16-29.—The land thus mapped out was

* Ellicott.

to be divided by a commission chosen by the Lord. It was to consist of Joshua and Eleazar and ten other men, one from each tribe, that the land might be carefully and honestly divided. Of all the names mentioned only Caleb and Joshua were known before; the rest were all new men. Was not this designed to teach that our Lord Jesus Christ, our King and our Priest, would divide the heavenly Canaan for us? And so he will. There is a land promised to us of which Canaan is only the humble and limited type. That is a land of infinite beauty, delight, and joy. Where sin, and sickness, and death, and sorrow are never known; where God himself dwells; where Jesus is, and where the angels and glorified ones are forever! That land is ours by promise, by purchase; by title it is ours. Jesus, our great Joshua, is preparing it for his people, and he will give it to them in the end of life's journey. Our lot in that land is fixed by us here. All who are pardoned and renewed, blood-washed and sanctified will have that inheritance. No such character will be neglected or kept out of its possession. Every one will stand in his own lot in that day. As the angel said to Daniel: "Go thou thy way until the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." They who have excelled in holiness and usefulness will also excel in brightness and glory. "One star differeth from another star in glory,"

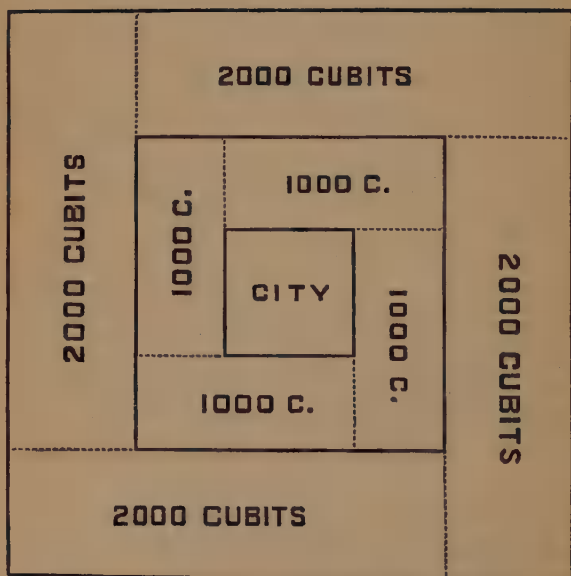
but all will shine with exceeding brightness and luster. The very humblest place in heaven will infinitely transcend all the glory of this world. If we may only reach that land and have our inheritance there any part will be blessed and glorious. But we may not only do this; we may have "an entrance ministered to us abundantly into this everlasting kingdom;" we may receive the welcome plaudit of our King, "Well done, good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." We may sit down with Christ upon his throne, and be diademed with an immortal crown, and join forever in the everlasting songs and halleluias which are ever ringing there. Well may we say with Moses: "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan!"

"There is the throne of David;
And there, from care released,
The song of them that triumph,
The shout of them that feast;
And they who, with their Leader,
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of white."

THE CITIES OF REFUGE SELECTED.

Chapter xxxv, Verses 1-6.—It is a divine ordination that they who “preach the gospel should live of the gospel;” that he “that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” In no dispensation has God forgotten his priests and ministers. But to make provision for their support has been frequently overlooked by the people whom they have served. In the days of Nehemiah it was ascertained that the people had failed to do this. Neh. xiii, 10. It has ever been so; it is so to-day. The people are apt to regard all such positive duties as voluntary charities, which they might do or not do, according to their tastes, wishes, or feelings. But this is a false and mistaken view of this matter. God *demand*s of the people a support for their ministers; and no one can neglect or disobey this command without realizing the divine displeasure. True, in some instances, Paul and others have worked with their own hands for their bread; but this was extraordinary, and not meant, even according to their own acknowledgment, to be permanent. In these verses we see how nicely these Jewish priests were provided for. Cities were to be given them of the tribes of Israel. Large pasture-grounds for their cattle, and vine-

yards were allowed them, and these, too, on a large and liberal scale. Some idea of this may be gathered from J. D. Michaelis: "Four lines drawn at a distance of 1,000 cubits from the walls of the city were to be assigned to the Levites; and the length of the city walls, supposing the city to be square, was to be added to the 2,000 cubits of the four boundary lines. The space included in the first 1,000 cubits from the city walls was designed for cattle; and the space included in the 2,000 cubits beyond the walls was designed for vineyards."* It was as follows:



* Ellicott.

But, you will observe, there were no lands given them to till. Their time and labor and talent were all to be employed in the service of God and of his sanctuary. They had to learn the law thoroughly, to offer sacrifices, and to minister to the people.

So it should always be. No minister of the Gospel can be, as we have before seen, at the same time a merchant, a farmer, a physician, or a lawyer. He must give all his time and attention to his legitimate work which God has given him to do. Many who have professed to be called of God to his work have attempted to take a part of their time for secular business—farming, lecturing, practicing medicine, or doing something else. But the Lord's disapproval has ever been manifested against such persons. They have either lost every thing which they had, or have had leanness and barrenness in their ministry and a lack of success in saving souls. If a man is called of God to preach his Gospel, he should wash his hands clean of all secular affairs and consecrate himself thoroughly to this work. If he do this God will take care of him and his family; but if he violate this divine ordinance, the Lord will withdraw from him all such aid and leave him to himself.

Verses 9-34.—*The Cities of Refuge.* These cities are beautiful types of Gospel provisions. They were to be *Levitical cities*. There were six of them, three on the east side of Jordan, and three on the west. Their purpose was to give the man who unfortunately, innocently, and without "malice pre-

pense" had killed another, a chance to save his life. The willful murderer *must be slain*. There was no hope for him. God's law is fixed and eternal upon this. He should be taken, even from God's altar, and slain. If he were not the land would be polluted with blood, and God's vengeance would be aroused against it. Many States, in our own and other lands, have labored to do away with the death penalty for murder; but in nearly every instance they have been glad to return to it for self-preservation. Imprisonment for life could be no substitute for the divine decree: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Gen. ix, 6. But homicide is not infrequently justifiable, or it is committed without design, or is the result of accident. Such cases demand and deserve special consideration. Of course, the act thus committed will be forever a source of misery to the one who has done it; but no guilt is attached to him in the sight of God or of man. But neither law nor justice demands the death of such a man. And here, in these early days of Jewish history, this provision of the cities of refuge was made. It is, of course, generally understood that the one who had the right to slay the murderer was the "goel," the nearest of kin, the redeemer of the one slain. This person was appointed to redeem the person or inheritance of a kinsman, if he was reduced to poverty so that he was obliged to sell himself into slavery or to sell his inheritance; he was to marry the widow of his

deceased brother, if possible; and also to avenge his blood in case he was slain.

Now, then, as soon as the murder was committed the murderer, innocent of intended homicide; or guilty of the same, was exposed to the vengeance of this "goel;" and if he were found anywhere out of the cities of refuge he could at once slay him without any guilt being attached to him. Or, if the willful murderer should take refuge in the cities appointed for this purpose, he must be taken from thence and slain; the provision was only for the unintentional and unfortunate slayer of man. Just as soon as possible, then, the murderer would start for one of these cities. It was not so far but that he could reach it. The farthest point was only thirty miles, and a swift runner could reach it in less than a single day; so that, as a rule, the chances were in favor of his getting there before the avenger of blood would reach him. No doubt, however, that in many instances the race was a hotly contested one, and the man-slayer has doubtless often got into the city just "by the skin of his teeth." But when he reached the city he was safe—only, however, on this condition: that he should remain in the city until the death of the high-priest. After his death, whether near or more remote, he might return to his tribe or city and dwell there without fear of harm.

How much Gospel there is in all this! Before every guilty, lost, and ruined sinner there is a hope set—placed or fixed—and he can fly for refuge to

it. Christ is our City of Refuge. He is our Redeemer. He has redeemed the inheritances and the persons of his people by his sufferings and death, and he will one day redeem them from the power of death and the grave. He is within easy reach of every penitent and believing soul. The distance is not great for him to travel; the day is not long. And just as the man-slayer was safe in these cities, so the soul that flees to Christ is safe in him. The law has no power over him; Justice with his flaming sword can do him no harm. Who can injure or condemn him who is in Christ? The sinner often cries out in his agony and the believer in his trial—

“Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.”

But when he is in Christ he sings for deliverance and safety. So if he would continue to be secure, he must *abide* in him—his City of Refuge. The very moment the man-slayer put his foot outside the city he was in peril and danger; the avenger might rush upon him and slay him with impunity. Only as long as he abode in the city was he safe. So the soul must *abide* in Christ. If he lose hold of him; if he stray away from him, there is not only danger, but also *death*.

No wonder that the Saviour urges us so constantly to abide in him; “for without *me* ye can do nothing.” “If he draw back it is toward perdition.” Another thought here is very precious. These cities of refuge are open for all. The stranger

as well as the Israelite could come with equal welcome and be secure. So in Christ Jesus: Jew and Greek, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free are equally welcome. All are invited to come to him; to flee unto him for refuge. He has made the provision for all, and it is ample for all. How blessed is this! Many poor sinners will say, "O there is no refuge for me! others can find a place there, but there is no shelter for my poor head; no refuge for me!" Not so, my dying friend. If you will only *come*, there is a refuge, even for you. Guilty, wretched, ruined, lost you may be, a stranger and a foreigner; but if you will come, you will be a stranger and foreigner no more, but a "fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God."

"Other refuge have I none;
 Hangs my helpless soul on thee:
 Leave, O leave me not alone,
 Still support and comfort me:
 All my trust on thee is stayed,
 All my help from thee I bring;
 Cover my defenseless head
 With the shadow of thy wing."

THE WOMAN QUESTION AGAIN.

Chapter xxxvi, Verses 1-13.—We have now come to the last chapter of this most interesting book of Moses. And while this is the last it certainly is not the least of these books. Woman in all the ages has had her rights; not always acknowledged, not always regarded, but always existing, and always more or less fully recognized by the best and most civilized peoples on the globe. The petition of these daughters of Zelophehad was granted to them. They were to share equally with the fathers, brothers, and sons of Israel. But still there were natural and reasonable limitations to this grant. They were not to marry outside of their own tribe, lest their inheritance should be transferred to a neighboring tribe. So that while they were thus allowed their inheritance, they were not allowed to divert it or transfer it to another tribe. They were permitted to have their own property, and they were to have all the privileges and immunities under the law which any male person could have.

In like manner, in the Church of Christ women should have their rights and privileges—to speak, to pray, to teach; and if God calls any of their number to preach they should be permitted to

preach, as others have done, with power and efficiency. And yet they are to remember that they are not men, nor should they act as men. There is a modesty, a retiracy, a shrinking from the public gaze which is ever in harmony with the female character. Thus, while called to duty, they should fearlessly perform it; and yet they should never lose sight of the position in which God has placed them. The highest honor to woman is to be treated with kindness and courtesy in her family and household relations; is to be a faithful, devoted, and virtuous wife, and is to be a fond, loving, and careful mother and nurse for her children. If, in the providence of God she is called to speak for him, or upon the rights or wrongs of humanity, let her do it with mingled meekness and boldness becoming her sex, and in the sweet spirit of her Lord and Master. But never let her *assume* control in Church or State, or *aspire* to positions unsuited for women, in politics or in Church government; but, if called by the voice of Providence to these positions, let her never shrink even from them. We would have her accorded *all* her rights; but we would ever have her remember that there are limitations which she should carefully observe.

The daughters of Zelophehad were presumptive heiresses. True, Canaan was not yet possessed; not yet had their tribe received its allotment; but yet they speak and act as if it were already in their hands, and of the whole matter as if it were *une affaire accompli*. Certainly they did this by

faith; for they believed all the words which the Lord had spoken. But as heiresses they may, probably, have been regarded by the young men of other tribes, and their hands may have been sought in marriage by them. This would be only natural. It is natural and right to marry. But even marriage itself has its limitations. There were certainly good men enough in their own tribe to marry, as they ultimately ascertained, and to them they must look. And so they did, and a marriage took place between each of them and their father's brother's sons; own cousins, it is true, but under the circumstances this was now allowed. Usually, however, marrying in such near relationship is not desirable, and it should ever be avoided. The physical, and sometimes the moral, results of such marriages are not always pleasant; and, indeed, often indicate that they are contrary to the will and the law of God. Many royal and more unroyal families have either run out entirely, or have been scrofulous, effeminate, weak, and helpless, because of these intermarriages. In the Christian Church great care should be taken that marriage should be with believers. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," is God's law. There is, there can be, no real concord between the believer and the non-believer. Very frequently such marriages, however hopeful in the beginning, are sad and serious in their consequences in the end. Young people, and young Christians, especially, cannot be too carefully guarded on these points. Let not any part of the

Lord's inheritance be drawn over to the side of the world, or sin, or Satan; but let it be left intact and unbroken. How blessed it is that we can take all of these things to the Lord! Moses brought the case of the daughters of Zelophehad before the Lord. Chap. xxvii, 5. Certainly, in a matter of so much interest and solemnity, and involving such vast and continued consequences, divine wisdom, divine help and aid should be asked for and enjoyed. And if we ask him for his wisdom and guidance "he will not upbraid us." When Moses had sought counsel of the Lord in the matter, he graciously answered: These daughters had not only done well, but they had also spoken well. Divine interposition was granted to them, and they were all well married. But how frequently parents arrange for the marriage of their children with men of wealth, with women of high social position; and then urge their children even against their own will and against their own best judgment, and even their persistent disapproval, to enter into this sacred relation for the sake of money, or position, or honor, or notoriety. What could be expected but that such marriages would bring sorrow, discord, divorce, infidelity to the marital relations, or an early grave? If these relations are entered into in the fear of the Lord, and under his divine direction, what could occur but a happy and pleasant life, a lovely and virtuous family, a lifetime of usefulness and comfort on earth, and a home of eternal rest in the future?

It should ever be remembered that the Lord's inheritance is his people. They belong to him. They are his children, his heirs. And have they any right to go out from this inheritance and to marry one who is living in unbelief and sin? Have they any privilege to marry an intemperate, or lustful, or impure man? If they should do this they would despoil the Lord's inheritance. Too often, in doing this, they become lost to the Church, lost to Christ, and are swallowed up in worldliness or in sin. Better, far better, for Christian young women to marry Christian young men. Worldly women and worldly, sinful men may intermarry. They are on the same line; they are walking the same road; but Christians are different from worldlings. They are born of God, with the new and heavenly birth, and their relations are, in the highest forms, different from others. And if they intermarry only with the children of God then the inheritance of the Lord is untouched; then the children of such a union will be blessed of the Lord; then, too, there will be comfort in the home.

Then our sons will be "as plants grown up in their youth;" and our daughters "as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Happy is such a family; for God dwells in the midst of them!

THE END.







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